

Abstract

"The Nature And Place Of Human Response To The Work Of Christ In The Objective Theories Of The Atonement Advanced In Recent British Theology By R. W. Dale, James Denney, and P. T. Forsyth."

This study is a re-examination of the theories of the Atonement advanced in recent British theology by R. W. Dale, James Denney, and P. T. Forsyth undertaken to show that both their critics and supporters have not fully understood the deep revision of the traditionally assumed ideas which they attempted. It will be shown that they advance theories parallel to the view which Dr. Leonard Hodgson has developed in recent years. Further, since objective theories of the Atonement are often criticized on the ground that they empty human response of real meaning, it is thought useful to examine the theories of these three well-known theologians to discover what human response is, since this has not been undertaken previously, and to assess the value of their theories for the life and work of the Church generally.

The first chapter aims to approach, identify, and define the meaning of the objective element of the Atonement. At the outset it is important to show that for them the law of God is universal and that the moral order is not a juridical system standing over God but the expression of the divine activity in relation to the world and men as He with them comprises a community of self-conscious free persons. Since atonement deals with evil and sin, what logically follows is a discussion of the fact, nature, and judgment of sin. Men are sinners, Dale, Denney, and Forsyth say, not because of imputed or transmitted guilt, but because they sin, and sin is possible only in a morally constituted universe in which God and man are related to each other as free moral persons in a community in which their relations are governed by moral law. While just criticism has been directed against Dale's view that the punishment of sin is exclusively retributive, the doctrine all three advance that sin in a moral world must be punished to vindicate righteousness and to preserve the integrity of the moral order in which God and

man share their lives is consistent with the facts of experience.

Throughout this discussion the similarity of their views with those advanced by Dr. Hodgson is shown. Judgment is both moral and personal in the moral order in which God and man share their lives. Dale, Denney, and Forsyth stress greatly the concept of the interdependence of man with man and of man with God, and their theories of the Atonement rest in an important way on this idea.

It was clearly the intention of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth to avoid the pitfalls of the traditional penal substitutionary or transactional theories in favour of a theology built up on personal, moral, and teleological ideas. However, their critics are most severe on them at this point claiming that they merely re-state these old theories retaining their undesirable elements. While recognizing that these three theologians were men of their age and the heirs of a tradition, we raise the question, What fundamental revision of the existing forms of thought did they make out of which their theories emerge? A number of preliminary points are important and need to be taken account of here. Revelation for them is God acting in history and then inspiring men by His Holy Spirit to perceive the significance of His activity. They insist that evil and sin must be taken as radical and irrational realities. Any theory of the Atonement, they say, ought to take into account the moral community of which God and man form a part and deal not only with human sin but with the problem of evil in the universe generally. Thus, a final, finished work is needed which will make an end of the power of evil in the world as well as redeeming mankind. But, as a finished work, it cannot undermine or destroy the reality of human freedom in response: both divine and human freedom must be preserved. Also, the moral realities love and forgiveness cannot be thought of as coming to us at no cost to God. And, in any theory of the Atonement the relations between the persons of the

Trinity must play an important role because the Atonement is an act of God. The Atonement thus in some sense has significance for God as the divine theodicy in dealing with the problem of evil. And, finally, the Atonement flows from, it does not procure, love which is the great reality of the world.

The significance of the Atonement for Dale, Denney, and Forsyth is to be found in the meaning of a fundamental paradox, namely, that in the Atonement it is both true to say that God Himself bears the responsibility for the conditions in which evil and sin could arise and for their consequences in the world order, and to say that in the Atonement God gives or sacrifices His Son for the redemption of the world. When we see God in Christ redeeming the world through the Cross, then what the penal terminology employed by these men signifies is not the strictness of mathematical equivalents but the truth that as only God could signify the nature and punishment of sin so only He can signify the nature of, and perform, the act which achieves redemption. While in the narrower sense the objective element is the first part of the paradox and the subjective the second, in fact it is impossible to make a final division between them for each is involved in both the Godward and manward relations. The tautological form of the argument is vindicated and elucidated in the character and content of the revelation of what God has done in Christ. The Cross is both the divine theodicy and relevant to man and the world in a way that is moral and personal without jeopardizing either the freedom of God or of man.

The objective element, that God in Christ Himself bears the evil of the world, has not been understood by the critics of these men. It rests upon the conception of the supremacy of Christ to which the early Church came by the mission of the Holy Spirit, as Dale points out. This is a crucially important instance of how the doctrine of revelation determines

the character of the doctrine of the Atonement. Christ was God manifest in the flesh; moral responsibility to God therefore is moral responsibility to Christ. The meaning of the objective element as an act of God in Christ is then developed in four main points with a fifth added which epitomizes them all in a key concept. First, the Atonement is an act of God whereby He assumes the responsibility for creating the conditions in which evil has arisen. While evil is an irrational element, it appears necessary as a contingency in the kind of world God wishes to create, and, He has not only foreseen this but acted to bear the responsibility Himself. Second, beyond this God accepts upon Himself the evil consequences of sin in the judgment which must be executed against it; Punisher and Punished are one. God can neither connive in the sinful act nor exhibit a spirit of angry vengeance; but He must vindicate righteousness and disapprove the wrong, and He has done it by Himself bearing the stroke of punishment. Third, a corollary of this is that God bears the dispersed consequences of evil and sin in such a way that the power of evil is frustrated in Him; He absorbs them and transforms their issue for good. Fourth, in this act is exhibited the power of vicariousness to forgive, convert, and heal; sin is forgiven as it is borne. Forgiveness is costly. Fifth, the Atonement is the divine theodicy; it is His own justification of His purpose to create a community of free persons in fellowship with Himself.

Chapter II is an exposition of the relevance of the Atonement to the world and the race in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. This expounds the second part of the paradox that in the Atonement God gives or sacrifices His Son for the world's redemption and the discussion is in two general parts dealing first with certain preliminary topics followed by the subject matter of the chapter proper dealt with in eleven general propositions.

Dale, Denney, and Forsyth have been criticized severely for their views at this point on the grounds that they employ terminology descriptive of the way Christ bears our sins which is both irrational and immoral and some of these criticisms are reviewed. While admittedly the language they employ poses no small problem to the reader it is clear that their viewpoint must be interpreted in the realm not of mathematical equivalents but of moral, personal, and teleological categories, and that this was their intention. They stress constantly that both the objective and subjective elements of the Atonement are necessary, but that care needs to be exercised in the way the terms objective and subjective are employed. In particular, the term subjective may be misleading because the Atonement has wider relevance than only human personal response; the Cross involves a cosmic redemption. Clearly the Atonement throws us back upon the doctrine of revelation and of the Trinity; it is a work of God manifest in the flesh. Just as Dale provided the clue on the relation of Christ to the moral order as the supreme moral Ruler of the universe, so here he shows that the early followers of our Lord were led by their enlarged understanding of Him through the Holy Spirit to see -- as expressed in the analogy of the vine and branches -- that He is the life or root of the race. Thus the key to the relation of His work to us is this role which He has filled from eternity. It is significant that for the most part the critics of these theologians fail to see the importance of this vital relation of Christ to the race as its root in the constructed doctrine of the Atonement. From this point the relevance of the Atonement to the world and the race is developed as follows:

I God in Christ performs an eternal act of sin-bearing love not merely as a spectacle of love, but as an act of sin-bearing love. Sin is fundamentally personal act against God who is personal and holy; thus forgiveness must be conceived of in personal and moral terms. Three things are important

here: the Cross shows that love can and does bear sin and forgive it; the Cross emerges from, it does not procure the divine love; and, the Cross declares that the cost which is attached to the forgiveness of sin has been borne by God. This transitive power of vicariousness, or forgiveness, has been released through the divine redeeming act as a moral, regenerating power into the world.

II What this means is that in Christ who is a real human and perfect person the power of evil to work evil has been shattered, frustrated, absorbed, or nullified. Evil finds nothing in Him; the moral powers of His life yield only and always good for the world and the race. The power of evil to work evil thereby has been transmuted as a power for good, and the good has been established, won, and vindicated.

III Through Christ's work the moral victory has been won in the world. This means that the relations between God and the world have been transformed; the Atonement signifies that the moral foundations of the world have been revolutionized and that a cosmic redemption has been achieved.

IV In Christ the human ideal is set up in actuality. Christ both honours righteousness throughout His life and He submits to it perfectly in death through His free obedience. In this God is vindicated in His aim of creating free persons who in fellowship with each other and Himself pursue and maximize the good of their own free wills.

V In His free act of obedience Christ made an actual submission to the divine sovereignty and judgment in holiness. He made universal submission under solidary judgment. This is the fruit of the divine love which bears sin and forgives it.

VI In His death Christ's relation to the Father expresses the truth of our relation because of our sin; otherwise, our relation to God in Him

would be an incredible fiction. The Death of Christ was both inevitable and indispensable; but its necessity follows not a priori but from the facts of our situation. Death is more than an event; for mankind it is an experience carrying with it penal overtones. Christ died our death.

VII The totality of Christ's life and redeeming act is legitimately available to us as the ideal and energy of our own response through the interpenetration of His life with ours. In the power of His perfect acceptance of, and submission to, the will of God we accept and submit. The principle of interdependence was designed by God to prepare us for Christ. Three ways in which Christ's response bears upon ours: the perfection and power of His life is ours; He has made solidary reparation to the holy law of God; in the power of His actual submission we submit to the will of God.

VIII The objective Atonement accomplished by Christ involves the form or possibility of our response. Human response is necessary to the fulfillment of the divine idea in Atonement. God provides a work that is consistent with righteousness and commensurate with what man is and ought to be. He aims to vindicate freedom. This work is able to create or to evoke the response for which it was intended.

IX The work of Christ is the guarantee of righteousness in us. Terms such as perseverance, faith and works, and sanctification are discussed. The Atonement marks not only the nullification of the power of evil generally but the death of sin in us in particular. We are called to share God's work of destroying evil.

X Christ's continuing, eternal mediation is the guarantee of our righteousness and of the final realisation of our ideal possibilities. This life can be achieved only within the redeemed community, the Church. The Church is the prophecy of, and the divine instrument for, the achievement of a world-interest of redemption.

XI Not only has Christ achieved a moral victory in the world and redeemed us from sin, but in His person there is set up the centre or storehouse of values which act on us persuasively to choose the highest pattern of life and to share in God's work of maximizing values. Certain ideas from the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead help in setting this forward and bear a marked resemblance to what Forsyth said as shown in the Appendix.

Chapter III is concerned first with the nature of biblical authority and of revelation. Here it is shown that the theories of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth are not constructed upon a doctrine of verbal inspiration. The authority of Scripture is the truth of Scripture brought home to the mind and heart by the Holy Spirit. Revelation in their theories is shown to be divine act in history interpreted by men who are inspired by the Holy Spirit to see its significance.

This is followed by a discussion on the meaning of personal Christian faith in Christ in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. They make clear that the task of applying the Atonement to the lives of men is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit who has direct access to men. The revelation of Christ to the soul as its redeemer and the world's redeemer is an act of God. By the Holy Spirit, they say, we are brought into direct personal relation with God through Jesus Christ; thus the fundamental character of Christian experience is personal and moral. Both the objective and subjective aspects of faith are important, they say; that is, the content of faith, and its exercise. But these aspects ought not to be confused. The presence of God by the Holy Spirit is given to our faith; faith is salvation not simply a means to it, and once a man has believed his own faith is self-authenticating regardless of the circumstances attendant upon it.

The problems attached to the language of personal experience cannot be minimized. In particular, three theological problems are raised: First,

if the ideal of Christian faith is our personal relation to and experience of God in Christ, what is the status of the world's unreached? Dale, Denney, and Forsyth treat all men as objects of the divine love and salvable; thus they reject the doctrines of absolute predestination and reprobation. Each of them stresses the value of morality apart from religion, and they distinguish saving from justifying faith as Dr. Hodgson has done. While the ideal of Christian experience is personal assurance by the Holy Spirit of the redeeming love of God in Christ, this does not serve for them as a mechanism for reprobating the unreached. God is the strength and He is the ally of all who pursue righteousness, they say. Thus the future and final destiny of the race is in God's hands. Here the value of an objective atonement is seen: the work of Christ has won the final victory and guarantees the establishment, vindication, and preservation of good everywhere in the universe.

Second, is personal faith consistent with the character of revelation? It is, provided we stand not only with the apostles in the assurance that in Christ the saving love of God is vouchsafed to us, but that we strive to discover the wider ranges of what the Atonement means for the world that the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us.

And third, is assured personal faith consistent with the true character of faith? This question leads to a discussion on the nature of faith in their writings with reference to the intellect, the emotions, and the will. Little emphasis is placed by them on faith as assent to truth, with the exception of Denney; but they all stress faith as rational insight or intuition and committal. The emotional elements of faith which they emphasize are trust, dependence, surrender, and indebtedness, release, and communion with the stress falling on trust and indebtedness. Also, all three hold

that obedience constitutes a critical aspect of the exercise of faith in which Christ is acknowledged Lord and Saviour. What emerges from this analysis is that faith is a complex activity of response in the various matrixes of human experience, but that a key concept which epitomizes them all and allows full scope for the exercise of them all may be isolated, namely, that both as given by the Holy Spirit and achieved as an insight faith is the conviction that God in Christ has redeemed the world and us to Himself. We receive the forgiveness God has won for us on the Cross. But in doing this we do not enter into a static relationship, but into a redeemed community cooperating with God in His work of redeeming the world from all forms of evil.

THE NATURE AND PLACE OF HUMAN RESPONSE
TO THE WORK OF CHRIST
IN THE OBJECTIVE THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT
ADVANCED IN RECENT BRITISH THEOLOGY
BY R. W. DALE, JAMES DENNEY, AND P. T. FORSYTH

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Introduction

The theories of the Atonement advanced in recent British theology by R. W. Dale, James Denney, and P. T. Forsyth in their various writings have met with both sharp criticism and enthusiastic support. This re-examination of their theories is undertaken to show that neither their critics nor their disciples have fully understood what they were driving at. On the one hand they have been criticized for re-introducing unacceptable variations of the traditional Protestant penal substitutionary theory at a time in theological history when it was felt that such modes of thought had been left behind safely, and on the other they have been followed for the same reason. It is hoped to show in this essay, that while they built on the older penal theories and employed terminology reminiscent of those modes of thought, what they were really driving at, though admittedly as striving after something which was not always either clear to themselves nor unambiguously expressed in their writings, was a much deeper revision of the traditionally assumed ideas than has usually been grasped.

What will emerge in the course of this study is the view that they adumbrate at important junctures in their own attempts to develop a theory the doctrine which has been advanced in recent years by Dr. Leonard Hodgson, under whose supervision this research was undertaken. It is believed that the exhibition of this coincidence of their views in striking ways with each other and as precursors of certain fundamental principles which Dr. Hodgson has enunciated will be of particular interest both for itself and as offering support for his views from an unexpected quarter. However, while some key ideas which their books contain are clearly advance insights, Dr. Hodgson has drawn these and others together into a coherent Christian theology and cosmology as well as a doctrine of the Atonement, against which, therefore, they must be contrasted because they did not develop a final system inclusive of the Christian's whole outlook on God, man, and the world as he has done.

Finally, since it is the case that objective theories of the Atonement are frequently criticized with no little vigour on the ground that they minimize human response to the work of Christ or empty it of real meaning, it is thought useful to examine the writings of these three theologians as modern representatives of such a theory in order (a) to discover what human response means in their theories as this has not been attempted previously, and (b) to assess the prospective value of their doctrines for new insights on the continuing problem the Church at large faces, and indeed must always face, in its task of confronting the world with the Christian Gospel. No one who reads the voluminous published writings of these three theologians can help but admire them for their piety, zeal, and courage during a period of the Church's history when the foundations of faith were severely shaken. Of course, a great deal of their writings bear in a practical way upon the Christian life as a life of response to Christ and any writer who studies them will be sorely tempted on setting down his results to write expansively in order to set forth the men and their work with all of their devotion to truth, warmth of spirit, and passion for Christ. But this essay will be restricted to the terms of reference outlined above in the hope that nevertheless the Christian lives and witness of these men will shine through the critical analysis.

The study will proceed along the lines of a simple and direct plan. In Chapter I the objective element of the Atonement will be approached, isolated, and elucidated. Chapter II will provide an analysis of the relevance of the Atonement to the world and men. And, in Chapter III, entitled Revelation, Faith, And Atonement, certain factors which emerge from the first two chapters will be developed further together with a discussion of several problems which also arise from them.

Chapter I

THE MEANING OF AN OBJECTIVE ATONEMENT

This first chapter aims to approach, identify, and discuss the objective element of the Atonement in and through these writers and will be developed along the following lines:

- I The nature of the moral order and the relation God sustains to it, p. 1.
- II The fact, nature, and punishment of sin, p. 11.
- III What these theologians profess to avoid in their theories, p. 27.
- IV The principles of approach to a theory. Solution in paradox. Identification of the objective element, p. 37.
- V The meaning of an objective atonement, p. 53.

I

At the outset it is expedient that we concern ourselves with two important matters which any objective theory must take account of, namely, the nature of the moral order or law of God and the relation God sustains to it. In discussing these three writers the thrust of our argument will be to show, first, that for them the law of God is universal, that is, it is the moral constitution of the universe; and, second, that this moral order is not an abstract, juridical system which might be conceived of as standing even over God, rather, it is the expression of the divine activity in relation to the world and men as they with Him comprise a community of self-conscious, free persons.

The existence of a moral order of values which are universally binding is for Dale a first truth of moral experience¹ for unless there are ontic values which are eternal and known by the mind to be such the world would be chaos. In the Preface to the seventh edition of The Atonement Dale answered a critic who asked whether in fact such a law as the eternal law of righteousness exists as follows,

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.²

This law is attested to and acted upon with greater or less accuracy by the conscience which is supreme in all matters of judgment.³ To pursue and maximize moral values is a universal human experience and provides the foundation for the Christian view, he says, that the purpose of God is the creation of persons who are self-determining in righteousness.⁴ Denney declares also that the conscience recognizes a universal moral order to which it stands necessarily related,⁵ and that the eternal and constitutional nature of the law determines the ethical character of human interpersonal relations and of the relations between man and God so that if we reject the idea of such a universal moral order, then such concepts as righteousness, sin, atonement, and forgiveness are rendered meaningless. But, when the law is recognized to be universal,

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904, p. 22.

²Dale, "Preface To The Seventh Edition Of Lectures On The Atonement", p. xxxviii-xxxix. First published in 1878 but included in the seventh and subsequent editions of The Atonement. Hereinafter it will be designated Preface.

³Dale, The Atonement, eighteenth edition; London: Congregational Union Of England And Wales, 1896, p. 368-369.

⁴Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1880, p. 46, and The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1871, p. 50.

⁵Denney, Studies In Theology, third edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895, p. 92.

"it ceases to be legal; it is not a statute, but the moral constitution of the world;"¹ it is "the very element of the spiritual life which is common to God and man."² Therefore neither God nor man can treat it as anything but what it is: "a constitution to which all personal beings are equally bound, a moral constitution of eternal and universal validity."³ And the dominant trait of Forsyth's approach is his declaration that the holiness of God is the ground of all things and the purpose of Christ's redeeming work, "the purpose of a world created by a holy God must be holiness, the reflection and communion of His own holiness;"⁴ thus God aims to win the communion of free persons in holiness not to absorb humanity into the divine nature. Nor does the holiness of God mean that He is a genial, kind, benignant All-Father who overlooks evil and sin.⁵ Forsyth warns us not to treat the righteousness of God rectorally so that God becomes primarily a Power, Judge, or King⁶ yet he urges us to recognize that it may be called the public righteousness of God nonetheless.⁷ The holiness of God is

¹Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903, p. 50.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, p. 168; cf. p. 145, 235.

³Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 45.

⁴Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ; London: Independent Press, Ltd., 1955, p. 228.

⁵Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, second edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909, p. 339; cf. Missions In State And Church; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908, p. 199-200.

⁶Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897, p. 15.

⁷Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross; London: The Independent Press Ltd., second edition, 1948, p. 28.

infrangible, a concept which when extended yields what we mean by the moral order of the world or the universality of the divine holiness.¹

He defines the Holy as the moral absolute, the ideal good,

Absolute being must be identical with the absolute moral norm. God wills good because He is good. He is good because He wills good ... The holy is the ideal good, fair, and true, translated in our religious consciousness to a transcendent personal reality, not proved but known, experienced immediately and honoured at sight as the one thing in the world valuable in itself and making a world.²

As we move up the moral scale in our understanding of the Atonement, he says, we leave behind such theories which explain it as a ransom to the Devil, as satisfying the wounded honour of God, or as an administrative device for the maintenance of public justice, in favour of a view founded upon righteousness as universal and holiness as eternal, though not individualistic but social in character in its outworking for reconciling the world and men.³

But are not these conceptions of the moral order primarily juridical, forensic, impersonal, abstract, and reminiscent of earthly law courts as Dr. R. F. Horton says of Dale's theory?⁴ Or, as Dr. Lidgett suggests of Dale, is the Atonement a dealing between God and man in Christ in terms of such a law so that while the relationship between God and the eternal law of righteousness is emphasized the personal element is neglected?⁵

¹Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 149.

²Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority; London: Independent Press Ltd., 1952, p. 5-6; cf. The Christian Ethic Of War; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1916, p. 147.

³Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 293-294.

⁴R. F. Horton, "The Atonement", in Faith And Criticism; London: Sampson Low Marston and Co., 1893, p. 197, 234.

⁵J. Scott Lidgett, The Spiritual Principle Of The Atonement; London: Charles H. Kelly, 1898, p. 158, 164, 168.

Does such a formulation in fact make the law of God more absolute than God Himself despite the probability that Dale and Denney would repudiate this, as Dr. Grensted argues?¹ Is it true of Forsyth that he advocates a loveless, hard, Old Testament conception of God as Dr. Hughes writes;² or that in his view there exists a dichotomy between love and holiness and that the Atonement is a transcendental transaction outside of personality as Mr. Escott declares?³

Dr. Lidgett rightly finds⁴ that the primary issue which must be settled in Dale's theology is the relation of the eternal law of righteousness to God and he reminds us that after rejecting the traditional solutions to the problem of the origin of ethical distinctions as neither founded on God's will, on God's nature, or the eternal fitness of things to which even the nature and will of God are subject, Dale affirms a unique relation between God and the eternal law of righteousness. In virtue of this relation it is said that in God the authority of the eternal law of righteousness is actively asserted, that is, in God the law is alive. But he holds that Dale is inconsistent on the ground that it is impossible to affirm that the law is alive in God, i.e. that the law and God are identical, without affirming that moral distinctions are derived from the nature of God or His will in some sense. However,

¹L. W. Grensted, A Short History Of The Doctrine Of The Atonement; Manchester: The University Press, 1920, p. 323.

²T. H. Hughes, The Atonement; London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1949, p. 45.

³H. Escott, Peter Taylor Forsyth; London: The Epworth Press, 1948, p. 28.

⁴J. Scott Lidgett, Op. Cit., p. 158-164. Dr. T. H. Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 78-79, makes a brief reference to the same point that Dr. Lidgett raises. Note also D. W. Simon, The Redemption Of Man; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889, p. 9-16; and P. L. Snowden, The Atonement And Ourselves; London: S. P. C. K., 1919, p. 90-91.

he concedes that though in this form Dale's metaphysic of ethic fails because it seems to imply a separation of the law from God, in fact Dale rejects any such separation. Without detracting from the cogency of Dr. Lidgett's criticism, this much can be said here: it seems likely that what troubled Dale, and what he did not clearly enunciate, is what Dr. Hodgson calls the distinction between formal and material ethics,¹ between the recognition of the will of God as the ground of morality and the content of that in the growing awareness of the race as to what is God's will. That Dale wished in some sense to preserve both² ideas is clear. We shall presently show in what sense God is the supreme Moral Ruler, but on the other hand Dale aimed to preserve the freedom of man, so he argued that moral obligations cannot originate in mere will, otherwise it would be impossible to account for the recognition of moral obligation where the existence of God is denied.³ While endeavouring to preserve the universal and absolute character of moral values as objects to men and subjects of their actions Dale failed to say that finally such values must be grounded in the will of God else God and the law are separated. Clearly he was attempting to avoid grounding material ethic immediately in the will of God in any arbitrary sense such as a divine decree or fiat for every particular instance. The moral responsibility man sustains to the eternal law of righteousness is of a

¹ Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement; London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1951, p. 21.

² For example, regarding the relation of the will of God to the eternal law of righteousness he says, in the crucial passage on the nature of the objective atonement, "The will of God is identified both by the conscience and the religious intuitions of man with the eternal Law of Righteousness", The Atonement, p. 391.

³ Dale, The Atonement, p. 364. cf. "The 'Moral View' Of The Atonement", British Quarterly Review, October, 1866, p. 420.

universal character because of the universal character of the law. We trust God not because of a divine fiat but because what our moral faculty recognizes to be good we find personified in God.¹ We cannot, he urges, entertain "a radical disbelief in the trustworthiness of the human faculties," else we make "every exercise of the human intellect an irrational waste of time, and all endeavours after righteousness an irrational waste of strength."²

What then, Dale asks, is the relation between God and the eternal law of righteousness? Is it independent and supreme claiming the allegiance not only of the creature but also of the Creator? Is there an ideal sceptre by which even God is governed? Such an hypothesis is untenable, for even in thought nothing can be higher than God, therefore, any conflict for supremacy between God and the eternal law of righteousness is impossible. It is the function of the conscience notably in the early stages of its development to recognize in particular actions the distinction between good and evil, and, as it develops in acuteness and strength of judgment it discovers that these distinctions are not arbitrary and isolated but are in fact the expressions of an eternal and necessary law. But we are possessed, he says, not only of a moral but also of an intellectual faculty by means of which we are capable of knowing God, and when God is revealed we discover in a living Person the same final

¹Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 46.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 365.

authority which conscience acknowledged in the eternal law of righteousness,

The supremacy of the law is absolute and irreversible. But when God is truly known, conscience, without revoking or qualifying the acknowledgement of this supremacy, confesses that the authority which it had recognized in an ideal law is the awful and glorious prerogative of a living Person.¹

God is therefore not bound by the eternal law of righteousness; rather, "in Him its authority is actively asserted."² The law is supreme in His supremacy; God is related to the law not by way of subjection but of identity. "In God the law is alive; it reigns on His throne, sways His sceptre, is crowned with His glory."³ We may not in any sense postulate a division between God and the law; therefore what we look for in a theory of the Atonement, if it is to be consistent with this living relation between God and the moral order, cannot be any kind of legal transaction between God, the law, Christ, and man.

Denney deplotes any tendency to depersonalize the law of God. The law of God does not mean "that the constitution under which God deals with men is forensic, nor that the moral order of the world is that of an abstract inexorable legalism."⁴ We cannot say that because certain consequences follow from certain moral acts that therefore the

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 372.

²Ibid., cf. "The Expiatory Theory Of The Atonement", British Quarterly Review, October, 1867, p. 484.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 372.

⁴Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 117.

reaction is the result of an impersonal moral process,

Moral consequences are consequences determined by a moral will, whatever the means employed to work them out, and we cannot hide from the will of God behind the very means which He is employing to express His will.¹

God is the supreme moral reality and ruler of the universe who exercises His authority not arbitrarily but in accordance with universal moral principles.² God is "a living Law of Righteousness and Love";³ the law is an expression of "God as a living, acting, personal God."⁴ As the moral constitution of the world the law of God is "the very element of the spiritual life which is common to God and man."⁵

Similarly, Forsyth wrote that the converse of the law as universal is the law as personal. It expresses, he said, the activity of God. We may not therefore either abstract away from the being of God His righteousness nor put into conflict His attributes. The primary condition for the existence of a free world is a free God bringing into existence a world in accordance with His own ideal of holiness. Freedom and holiness are the essential requisites of true personality and it follows therefore that true freedom is absolute holiness, which we predicate of God. The divine law is not the law of another laid on

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 145; cf. Studies In Theology, p. 92.

²Denney, On Natural Law In The Spiritual World; Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1885, p. 47.

³Ibid., p. 53.

⁴Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 142.

⁵Ibid., p. 168; cf. p. 235.

Him but the expression of His own personality and if He ceased to be personal He would be parting with power. A moral order therefore exists because of the divine activity within the world and God cannot trifle with its character,

nothing in the compass of the divine nature could enable Him to abolish a moral law, the law of holiness ... God's holy law is His own holy nature.¹

Forsyth declares that the expression of the divine holiness as the divine personal activity is best seen in the provision of redemption in Christ. We are conscious that all about us is the Holy God -- the total action of the spiritual world is holiness -- but this power is not revealed finally as dispersed through history but as acting in accordance with its own moral and personal nature in a climactic act which gathers up the purpose of history within itself. Herein lies the significance of Christ's incarnation and redeeming act on the Cross into which a divine life was put and which, when answered by our act of faith brings us into the divine life of freedom which God intended for man in communion with Himself.²

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ; London: Independent Press Ltd., fifth impression, 1952, p. 112-113. cf. The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 304; The Power of Prayer; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910, p. 76-77; The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace; London: James Clarke and Co., 1901, p. 100; and Missions In State And Church, p. 66.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 335-336; cf. The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 4 ff.

II

It is incumbent upon us before proceeding further to set forward certain teachings from the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth on the fact, nature, and judgment of sin which will bear on their doctrines of the Atonement.

Sin is a simple and universal fact of human experience and arises as a problem for man in the disparity between the actual and ideal in his experience. Despite Dr. Rashdall's charge¹ that Dale uncritically assumes the historicity of the Genesis account of the Fall and of St. Augustine's doctrine of total depravity, we note that what Dale in fact said was that men are sinners not because of any supposed imputation of Adam's fall to the race, but because they actually sin.² Denney agrees with this when he writes that as the beginnings of human life lie beyond the reach of history in the mythology of Genesis, we are compelled when assessing the nature of man to ask not, What was Adam? but, What is man?³ The argument in Scripture for the sinfulness of man is moral, that is, it is expected that the fact will appeal to the conscience of every man. And Forsyth says,

¹Hastings Rashdall, The Idea Of Atonement In Christian Theology; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1925, p. 494.

²Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882, p. 162. cf. Christian Doctrine, p. 199-217.

³Denney, "Fall (Biblical)", Encyclopaedia Of Religion And Ethics, (ed. James Hastings); Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1912, Vol. V, p. 701. cf. The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 147; "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", The Expositors Greek New Testament; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902, p. 606; and, Studies In Theology, p. 78-79.

The need of Atonement does not rest on an historic fall, but on the reality of present and corporate guilt. And the fact of it rests on an experience as real as any which forms the basis of science.¹

Dale describes at some length the experience of mankind as he sees it where the root of our individual and racial dilemma centres in our failure to achieve the moral ideal.² Denney asks, who can claim that his life is in correspondence with God's? The root of man's condition is located in the "discord or disproportion between man's nature and his state; as a failure to be what God destined him for."³ For Forsyth also the final crisis of the race is moral in character, it is the problem of just how we shall be able to confront the holiness of God.⁴

Of the several parallel ideas which are to be found in the writings of these three theologians about the nature of sin, the one which commands our chief interest is that sin is possible only in a moral universe in which God and man are related as persons in a community, not simply by statute, and that therefore sin can be defined in one way only, by its relation to God. As the law of God is alive in God sin is our personal defiance of God; it is personal act against a personal God. The self is,

¹Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, Essay III; London: James Clarke and Co., 1900, p. 63.

²Dale, Nine Lectures On Preaching, eighth edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895, p. 163; and, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 192.

³Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 92. cf. "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", p. 598-608; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 10, 200; and, On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 40-41.

⁴Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 149, 301, 333; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 59-60; Christian Perfection; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899, p. 114 ff; This Life And The Next; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1918, p. 2, 9, 59; and, The Principle Of Authority, p. 181.

impatient of divine control; it assumes that whatever our moral character may be, we resist or forget the Divine authority, -- and that is sin. It assumes that the august sovereignty of the living personal God is rejected in that central region of life which determines what a man really is and what his destiny must be.¹

Denney also defines sin as a voluntary, wilful human act in which the human will is pitted against God's,

Sin can only be defined in one way -- namely, by relation to God; and till the relation to God comes into view it is impossible for us to understand either the realities or the possibilities which it involves. What is it that is violated by sin? Is it our own nature? Is it an abstract law which is embodied in the world? No, it is the will of the living God, that will in which alone we have eternal life. When we sin we literally sin against something. There is something which resists us and which we have to overcome and push out of our way ... We spend force pushing something aside which resists us as we push ... it is the will of the living God.²

Characteristically, Forsyth declared that as sin is action, action alone can be its cure.³ Sin, he says,

is not measured by a law, or a nation, or a society of any kind, but by a Person. The righteousness of God was not in a requirement, system, book, or Church, but in a Person, and sin is defined by relation to Him.⁴

From the foregoing it is clear, first, that sin is defined from actual experience not in relation to an obscure event; second, that it emerges in the moral consciousness of the race in the disparity between what we ought to be and actually are; and third, the acts involving us in sin are the personal acts of self-conscious, intelligent beings who rebel against a holy God and not merely violations of a legal code.

¹Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895, p. 185.

²Denney, "Can Sin Be Forgiven", in Questions Of Faith; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904, p. 158-160.

³Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments; London: Independent Press Ltd., 1953, p. 190. cf. Christian Perfection, p. 40.

⁴Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 56; cf. The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 22-23.

Dale maintained that the only justification for the imposition of a penalty against sin is simply that the punishment is deserved. While the reformation of the sinner is a laudable aim, he said, to inflict penalty in order to achieve this is immoral; neither is punishment an expedient for strengthening the authority of law; nor is it God's personal resentment for the violation of His dignity. In defining what punishment is two points are stressed: (a) punishment is "pain and loss inflicted for the violation of a law", and (b) "whatever moral element there is in punishment itself ... is derived from the person or power that inflicts it."¹ Denney agrees that condemnation and wrath are necessary reactions of God to sin. An identification of the righteousness of God with His grace fails to take seriously the holy character of God and the moral constitution of the world. God cannot be God if He lack wrath.² A truly moralised theology, Forsyth declares, must say much about the wrath of God.³

A number of criticisms have been directed against the doctrine of the divine punishment of sin, notably against Dale's theory, because of the exclusively retributive character of punishment as he defines it. Dr. Lidgett⁴ criticizes Dale for excluding any disciplinary elements from punishment on the ground that the closer the relationship between

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 383, 386. cf. "The Expiatory Theory Of The Atonement", p. 489.

²Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 93-94. cf. The Second Epistle To The Corinthians; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894, p. 185, 212-213; Factors Of Faith In Immortality; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910, p. 105 ff; and, War And The Fear Of God; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916, p. 27.

³Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 130. cf. The Justification Of God; London: Independent Press Ltd., 1948, p. 175 ff.

⁴J. Scott Lidgett, Op. Cit., p. 165-166.

the parties concerned the more must the moral effect of it on the punished be taken into account. Dr. Moberly's¹ strictures are substantially the same in his statement that (1) Dale's definition is too arithmetical on the one hand, and (b) too limited on the other because punishment inflicted as punishment is still disciplinary. The same criticisms are implicit in what Dr. Horton,² Canon Mozley,³ and Dr. Cave⁴ have to say about Dale. This is true also of Dr. Hughes⁵ who writes on all three, though he acknowledges an attempt by both Denney and Forsyth to relate God and man on more personal grounds. Dr. Grensted⁶ criticizes Denney for his penal, retributive viewpoint on punishment and Dr. Rashdall⁷ indicts both Dale and Denney for advancing the idea of punishment or curse as an end in itself. No attempt is made here to defend Dale for his extremely rigid conception of punishment; however, that retribution is an important and legitimate element of punishment in the moral order and important in any theory of the Atonement will emerge as this discussion proceeds. We note, though, that in fact Denney did include a disciplinary or reforming element in retributive judgment.⁸

¹R. C. Moberly, Atonement And Personality; London: John Murray, 1913, p. 4 ff.

²R. F. Horton, Op. Cit., p. 234.

³J. K. Mozley, The Doctrine Of The Atonement; London: Duckworth, 1947, p. 178.

⁴Sydney Cave, The Doctrine Of The Work Of Christ; London: University of London Press Ltd., 1950, p. 225-227.

⁵T. H. Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 78, 87, 45-46.

⁶L. W. Grensted, Op. Cit., p. 322-324.

⁷Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 93, 422-423, 426, 494.

⁸Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 208.

A criticism of more important consequence, not only in regard to Dale against whom it is directed but also in regard to Denney and Forsyth by implication, is the charge by Dr. Lidgett that the penal relationship of the sinner to God is nowhere discussed.¹ Two factors emerge here which bear significantly upon this problem and our task will be first to state what they are and then to attempt to elicit a doctrine which will (a) do justice to both, (b) yield the relationship Dr. Lidgett speaks of, and (c) bear in an important way on the doctrine of the Atonement. The two factors are: first, that the divine judgment is seen in the total reaction of the moral and physical order to sin and, second, that this reaction is in fact God Himself judging sin.

Dale says that all the forces which are in league with the eternal law of righteousness are expressions of the will of God; for example, the punishments of sin in the very constitution of human nature and the laws of society which aim to punish wrongdoing are the will of God. Clearly the present world order ministers the wrath of God.² Denney argues that the physical and moral elements of the world comprise a unity which reacts totally to evil and sin; reactions therefore which are as broad as man's being and as broad as the divinely constituted environment in which he lives,

¹J. Scott Lidgett, Op. Cit., p. 167-168.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 385, 389. cf. The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of John Angell James; London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1859, p. 22; and, C. A. Horne, "R. W. Dale", in Nine Famous Birmingham Men (ed. J. H. Muirhead); Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, Ltd., 1909, p. 263-264.

The divine punishment is the divine reaction against sin expressing itself through the whole constitution or system of things under which the sinner lives ... the inmost conviction of conscience itself is the conviction that the natural and the moral are one, and that the universe is in arms against the sinner.¹

And examples could be multiplied from Forsyth to show, as he says, that "history is a long judgment process;"² though he emphasizes that in his view the last judgment of God is not an eschatological date nor the total course of history but the Cross.

But, on the other hand, all three writers strive to retain a personal relation of God to man in judgment. Dale insists that while the penalty which is imposed by God is grounded in universal principles it is not the action of impersonal forces, but of God reacting personally to sin,

The act of God in punishing wrong-doing is an act by which the Creator Himself asserts the authority of the law which His creature has insulted and defied.³

Resentment against sin, he says, is an element of the life of God.⁴ As consistent with Denney's statement quoted above we note here that he refuses to supplant the personal relation of God to sin in judgment with the idea of law operating mechanically throughout the universe when we declare that the universe is in arms against the sinner, because the unity of the moral order of which God and man form a part means that God's reaction is personal though mediated through the powers of nature.⁵

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 203-204. cf. p. 214, 227, 276; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 59-62; The Death Of Christ, p. 127; and, Studies In Theology, p. 94-96.

²Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 174.

³Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 24.

⁴Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 159.

⁵Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 144-145, 223.

And Forsyth also argues that the divine judgment is an essential element of the divine nature and not a corrective device,

The ultimate, the fundamental, judgment is an adjustment between persons -- God's and man's. It is not between a soul and law.¹

What we need here to make these two ideas, that of a universe regulated by law on the one hand and a personal God judging sin on the other, intelligible, is a unifying concept in which both are affirmed without involving us in the charge that we postulate a mechanical universe which reacts impersonally to sin or a God who is personally resentful of any infringement of His honour. The solution to this problem is epitomized in the position taken by Dr. Hodgson that the fundamental truth about punishment is that it is an activity which by its very nature can only exist between a community and a member of itself.² We shall now proceed to show that in the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth there is a great deal said about such a moral community of which God and man form a part. Despite the seemingly harsh language employed by all three on the subject of judgment it will be intelligible in such a moral world, and the doctrine of the Atonement which deals with it will, in the light of this community idea, be intelligible not only in the Godward but also in the manward relation.

We are led into this discussion by two significant statements from Dale's writings. First, he says that the relationship between God and moral creatures possessing free-will must be governed by righteousness,

¹Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 180. cf. The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 22; The Work Of Christ, p. 240; and, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 85.

²Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 56.

When God gave existence to creatures having a moral nature, invested, therefore with the prerogatives of freewill, He assumed the responsibility ... of governing them according to the principles of eternal righteousness.¹

And second, when speaking of a conception of punishment which will satisfy us, he declares that we can be satisfied only if a conception is advanced which touches both the social and moral ideas,

We conclude, therefore, that the only conception of punishment which satisfies our strongest and most definite moral convictions, and which corresponds to the place it occupies both in the organization of society and in the moral order of the universe, is that which represents it as pain and loss inflicted for the violation of a law.²

We will now develop this concept of social and moral interdependence from the writings of these three, showing that the concept of punishment is intelligible both within the structure of society as we know it and in the moral relation which obtains between God and man.

That the race is an organic, social, and moral community of which the particular members are dependent upon one another may be drawn from the theological writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth abundantly and unambiguously, and a great deal of the criticism of their theories of the Atonement hinges on a failure either to note this doctrine or to take it seriously. This revival of interest among them in the corporality of the race as a living issue for theology both in the wider ranges of social life and in the Church is in contrast to the individualism which tended to characterize Protestant theology, particularly during and subsequent to the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. From the early days of his theological career Dale maintained

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 23. cf. "The 'Moral View' Of The Atonement", p. 425.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 383.

the principle of a divinely appointed interdependence in both the natural and spiritual aspects of human life,

while God's providence overshadows all aspects of life, he has ordained that in natural and spiritual life we are responsible for one another.¹

And the following quotation by Denney, with which Forsyth is in agreement,² that personality develops only through moral freedom trained by social culture, is parallel to Dale's statement,

There is no such thing as the absolutely individual man with whose acts, as something between himself and God, we have been dealing. All men are members of a society in which they live and move and have their being morally and in all they do, of right or wrong, they both affect and are affected by the body to which they belong.³

Forsyth attempts to clarify this idea by an example drawn from the family relation to show that the physical and social connection among human beings is the basis of a real moral and psychic unity within the family and the race. A man and his wife, he says, are not only one flesh but they are one spiritual personality "by the harmony of an indelible psychic difference" which, when extended to the race, is the ground for affirming its corporate unity.⁴

¹Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of John Angell James, p. 23-24; and the following: "God intended that we should live in most intimate union with each other ... our lives are strangely interwoven. We are necessary to each other ... this has largely determined the constitution and moral order of the world," Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions; London: Jackson, Walford, and Hodder, 1871, p. 67. cf. p. 69.

²Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 289; The Work Of Christ, p. 8.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 191. cf. The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 45; On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 44-45; and, The Epistles To The Thessalonians; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1892, p. 92.

⁴Forsyth, Marriage, Its Ethic And Religion; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912, p. 34. cf. The Principle Of Authority, p. 289; and, Theology In Church And State; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915, p. 156-157, 184.

Interdependence is clearly the essential element in the social matrix, says Dale, for while individualism is an assertion of the infinite worth and sovereignty of individual men against illegitimate encroachments by society, "every man was made for his brother, every man's brother for him".¹ Denney agrees with Forsyth that a society has a certain "spirit" or "mind" that fashions the character of its members; therefore, none of us has anything but what he has received because all things are historically mediated;² "personality is created by social influences, and finds itself only in these."³

But our discussion thus far is but preliminary to what we now confront, namely, the critical issue of the race's moral solidarity or ethical interdependence. Dale declares that there is a community of moral life among men and that in the corporate life of the race there exists a mysterious principle of lawlessness working for unrighteousness,

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.⁴

¹Dale, Fellowship With Christ; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1891, p. 306. cf. Genius The Gift Of God; London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1864, p. 11-12.

²Denney, The Church And The Kingdom; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910, p. 154. cf. On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 41, and, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. vi.

³Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 262. cf. The Charter Of The Church; London: Alexander and Shephard, 1896, p. 61; The Principle Of Authority, p. 60; and, Marriage, Its Ethic And Religion, p. 14.

⁴Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 208, 212. cf. p. 215 and the following from p. 217, "The guilt of every act of sin that we commit attaches to each one 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".

It is clear, said Denney, from both history and experience that in some terrible way man in his sin shares responsibility with his fellows for the kingdom of sin on earth;¹ sin marks the disruption of the community of moral life shared by God and man,

In the widest sense of the word, sin, as a disturbance of the personal relations between God and man, is a violence done to the constitution under which God and man form one moral community, share, as we may reverently express it, one life, have in view the same moral ends.²

Along with Dale, Denney stresses that the existence of a common or corporate conscience implies also the existence of a common moral life with channels through which both reconciling and disintegrating influences may flow.³ That Forsyth's position is identical with that of Dale and Denney is clear from the following,

The unity of the race is a moral unity ... It is in the conscience, where man is a member of a vast moral world. It is the one changeless order of the moral world, emerging in conscience, that makes man universal ... What makes the world God's world is the action and unity of God's moral order of which our conscience speaks.⁴

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 86, and, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 22-26.

²Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 54. Elsewhere Denney argued for the idea of this moral community not on the grounds of Jewish provincial or religious law, but the common feeling of the race that a universal law constituting the "moral world in which God and man live a common life" exists, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 167-168.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 193.

⁴Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 122, 123. Note the following: "As man grows the sin grows. The Kingdom of evil grows with the kingdom of good. Sin, self, exploits every stage in the progress of society ... The social organism has a common and organic sin. And a collective sin must have a central treatment," The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 22.

We are now ready to draw a number of conclusions from our discussion thus far. First, it is clear that there is a community of moral life among mankind and between God and the race. No Christian system could have any meaning unless the moral values of which it speaks are of eternal and universal validity, and this is as true of subjective theories of the Atonement as it is of those that are objective, for, in the case of the former, if the Cross is simply an appeal it must be on the grounds of values which are universal and eternal. What God is aiming at, as Dr. Hodgson puts it, is the creation of a community of free persons who freely cooperate and voluntarily choose those values which are the will of God.¹ "We were created", wrote Dale, "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."² Genuine human freedom is defended and preserved by all three writers as the foundation stone of the moral relations between God and man. The following quotation from Dale is characteristic of all three,

but 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 and defying all authority and power.³

Second, evil and sin are a disruption of the moral order, and more particularly, as sin is possible only on the part of free, self-conscious

¹Leonard Hodgson, Op. Cit., p. 41.

²Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 307.

³Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 50. cf. Genius The Gift Of God, p. 5; Nine Lectures On Preaching, p. 189-190. Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 84; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 105, 343, 349; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 193-194. Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 63-64, 334-335; The Principle Of Authority, p. 58-59, 357; The Power Of Prayer, p. 59.

persons and against another person, it is the disruption of the moral life of the community in which God and man share. However much the historical origins of evil and sin are obscure, they are real, hard facts of experience and must be dealt with if God's purpose for the world and men is to be achieved. The corporate sin of the race is not posited on the ground of an original fall the effects of which are transmitted biologically or imputed theologically, but on the ground that the community of men are actual sinners; and it is this which gives meaning to the term "fallen" when applied to the race. Dale, when discussing the Pauline argument regarding Adam in the fifth chapter of Romans declares that it is not definitive of the historical origin or transmission of sin.¹ What scripture assumes, he says, is the universality of actual sin involving the entire race, and the same has been clear about the position of Denney and Forsyth from the foregoing discussion.

Third, despite the attempts of certain critics that we have noted to reject the idea of retribution out of hand, the punishment or judgment of sin is a necessary element of the moral order in which God and man comprise a community of free moral persons. However much Dale may be criticized for excluding from his definition of punishment a reforming element, that retribution is an essential aspect of the moral life seems clear, not as an a priori proposition, as Dr. Stevens seems to attribute to Dale,² but as a factor of experience arising from the

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 212-217.

²G. B. Stevens, The Christian Doctrine Of Salvation; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1905, p. 328.

conditions in which we live. As Dale had said, the only justification of punishment is that it is deserved;¹ or, to put it in Denney's words, conscience testifies to its justice.² Even family relations must be founded upon moral principles, he adds, because the family exists in a world of universal moral values which are normative for its relations.³ Dr. Hodgson has pointed out that the community can neither connive in the deed nor manifest embittered vengeance; but it must, to maintain its standards, express its disapproval and disowning of the act.⁴ The justification of punishment both as retribution on a past act and as a vindication of the moral standards of the community are common elements of ordinary human experience.

Fourth, the exercise of judgment is a divine act which means that God acts personally within and on behalf of the community of free persons of which He is a part disapproving and disowning sin.

Fifth, the divine act of judgment not only vindicates righteousness but it also measures correctly the magnitude of the offense and the corresponding punishment, "when the precepts of the law were violated, it was for Him to mark the true significance of the offense."⁵

The importance of the two preceding propositions that judgment is a divine act and a divinely measured act for what follows in atonement

¹"The conscience affirms it vehemently", The Atonement, p. 376.

²Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 185, 212-213.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 187-188.
cf. The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 45.

⁴Leonard Hodgson, Op. Cit., p. 56, 64.

⁵Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 23.

will be made clear later in this chapter. We note here, however, that with Dr. Hodgson, who declares that "the wrath of God and divine punishment are essential elements in a doctrine which is to face the facts of evil and retain a fundamental optimism,"¹ Forsyth says that if God cares enough for us to be angry, He cares enough to redeem.²

Finally, the predicament of man in his sinful condition and the divine ideal of free communion with God which attracts him is the issue to which the Cross is addressed for the reconciliation of mankind. Here lie powerful motives for man to repent in faith, for, as Dale says, the human conscience cannot rest except on the assumption that all men were created to be brethren in Christ and to share eternal union with God in Him.³ At the point of the human predicament in sin and alienation from God the human passion to be forgiven is met by the divine passion to redeem and forgive through the Cross, said Forsyth.⁴

¹Leonard Hodgson, Op. Cit., p. 60.

²Forsyth, Holy Christian Empire, p. 11; The Justification Of God, p. 179 ff; and, The Work Of Christ, p. 243.

³Dale, "Preliminary Essay", C. Schmidt, The Social Results Of Christianity, p. xvii. cf. The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 85-86; and, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of John Angell James, p. 15, 20.

⁴Forsyth, "The Problem Of Forgiveness In The Lord's Prayer", in, The Sermon On The Mount. A Practical Exposition Of The Lord's Prayer; Manchester: James Robinson, 1903, p. 206. Denney wrote, "There is a relation between God and His human creatures, a relation of universal moral significance, on which the blessedness of man, and his attainment of his chief good, are dependent, and this relation is in point of fact impaired. Man is somehow wrong with God, and the task of reconciliation is to put him right again," The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 189.

III

In our approach to the objective element of the Atonement in and through Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, it will be helpful for us to note that there are certain ideas which have been associated frequently with the doctrine that they wished specifically to avoid because such ideas, they said, are not consistent with the truth of the Christian faith. Dale's principal spiritual heritage was English Puritanism but as modified by the experiential motif of the Evangelical Revival. In 1880 he declared that Calvinism was a dead issue for Congregationalism and that "like the rest of the world, I have given up Calvinism; and twenty years ago, when it still had an arm vigorous enough to strike rather heavily anyone that challenged its authority, I used to preach against it rather frequently and with hot energy."¹ Calvinism had become too final a system so that its teachers and creeds had come between men and Christ; nevertheless, its error was a noble one in the declaration that righteousness was possible only for those who rested solely in God for it.² Dale rejected outright any divine decree of reprobation, limited atonement, and the doctrine of irresistible grace; maintaining that man is capable of the knowledge of God, that men are morally free, that Christ died for all men, and that man's relation to God is personal and moral not mediated through a juridical scheme.³ But if he was critical

¹Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 195. Note p. 22.

²Ibid., p. 266-267. cf. The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 50-51.

³Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 30-32, 84.

of the older Protestant theological systems neither was he unsparing of the Evangelical Revival and certain tendencies which followed in its wake; though he stood fundamentally in this same tradition where the preeminent place was given to the believer's experience of Christ. That Christianity must display a primary concern for individual salvation he conceded,¹ but this dominant concern with individual salvation and personal experience had the result of isolating the Christian and his community from the world and also of generating apathy about the problems of the Kingdom's broader realization. Further, any solution which is advanced for human problems through a doctrine of the Atonement must, he said, allow full freedom and scope for the intellect and moral sensibilities to develop a theory commensurate with the past and present developing insights of the Church.² We must aim at something beyond the results of the literalist, proof-text method; thus the biblical metaphors do not together form a coherent theory nor were they intended to do so; rather, they touch on the transcendent fact only at single points.³ They are illustrative of the truths which hedge the fact about and are therefore of vital importance as tests of a theory but we must construct a logical and moral doctrine cast in personal terms which will satisfy the factual data of historical Christianity and also our

¹Dale wrote that the revivalists' supreme care for men must never be lost sight of; that the whole outlook of the movement which displaced Calvinism was constructed on the premise that God does love all men alike, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 196. cf. The Old Evangelicalism And The New; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889, p. 21.

²Dale, The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 17-19, 31; and, Fellowship With Christ, p. 108.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 358.

intellectual and moral sensibilities. Therefore, while there may be great devotional value in contemplating the sufferings of Christ it is not the sufferings per se which atone; neither were the sufferings of the Cross the penal crushing of an innocent party; nor is it true either that the sin of Adam was imputed to the race or that Christ endured the judgment of a Father filled with wrath against the Son, "that any serious theologian ever believed either of these revolting propositions is incredible ... against Christ there could be no resentment in the breast of the Father."¹

When reviewing the history of the Atonement Denney maintained that while sacrifice must make a difference to God all true religion shrinks instinctively from the idea of a sinner buying his way with God. The Atonement cannot be interpreted in legal, quantitative terms but in personal and moral categories both of the relations man and God sustain to each other and of the person, life, and work of Christ.² The meaning of such terms as substitute, representative, and propitiation is not derived from any sense of mathematical equivalents or the idea of our propitiating an angry Deity, but from the moral value such ideas have for us when we see that God Himself provides the propitiation in love.³ Whatever we say about the Atonement, we cannot say that Christ was accursed by God, or that He suffered judgment because of a bad conscience, or that He was the object of the Father's displeasure and the victim of His wrath, or that the innocent should be punished for the guilty.⁴

¹Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 85.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, Chapter II.

³Ibid., p. 94, 155-156, 280-281; The Death Of Christ, p. 176; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 95, 97-99, 101.

⁴Denney, "Curse", A Dictionary Of The Bible, (ed. James Hastings); Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1904, Vol. 1, p. 535; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 262, 273.

We must move beyond the legal framework of the post-Reformation divines who seemed to conceive of the divine righteousness and the Atonement primarily as a legal act to a theory framed along lines of personal relations which exhibit the Atonement as originating in love while yet dealing seriously with sin.¹

Finally, it is clear that Forsyth enunciates similar cautions as we have shown of Dale and Denney. We have outgrown the idea, he said, that God can be reconciled by a means exterior to Himself, or that Atonement issues from or provides a solution for a strife of attributes in God, because clearly the sacrifice of Christ flowed from, it did not procure, grace.² Christ did not deflect the divine anger so that its flash fell on Him while we had no part nor lot in the matter.³ Christ did not take our punishment in any quantitative sense; neither did His sufferings of themselves atone; nor was there any ledger transfer of guilt to Christ involved in Atonement.⁴

We must renounce the idea that He was punished by the God who was ever well pleased with His beloved Son.⁵

But, there appears to be an irreconcilable different between the apparent thrust of thought and use of penal language by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, with the foregoing asseverations as many of their critics have pointed out. We will now take some account of this, though from

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 117; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 6, 104-105; "Can Sin Be Forgiven", p. 156; and, The Death Of Christ, p. 123-129, 140, 284.

²Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 64; The Work Of Christ, p. 117; and, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 40.

³Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 40.

⁴Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 65; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 41.

⁵Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 41. cf. The Work Of Christ, p. 181.

the standpoint mainly of terms describing the relation of Christ's work to the moral order; the terminology concerned more directly with the relation of His work to the race will occupy our attention more appropriately in Chapter II.

Dale speaks of Christ coming into the world to make the sorrow, and so far as He could the very sin of the world His own, of the necessity of the moral experience of the garden of Gethsemane and the Cross, of Christ's act as homage to law.¹ He urges, as we have shown, that the penalties which God inflicts upon sin are an assertion by Him that those who sin deserve to suffer, and that the Atonement is the fulfillment of this principle in two respects (a) that the sufferings were not suppressed nor held back by love, but were asserted in the grandest form possible, and (b) that the moral significance of suffering as a punishment of sin is derived from the fact that it is inflicted by the will of God.² We readily comprehend therefore why Dale has been criticized as an apparent exponent of the strict penal substitutionary theory. Dr. Horton thinks that Dale is fundamentally at variance with the apostolic teaching by founding the Atonement not in the love of God but as satisfaction to law of which, he says, the Apostles had no idea as an abstract metaphysical entity.³ Dr. Fairbairn says that while Dale attempts to locate the Atonement not in the sufferings

¹Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 77, 87; Christian Doctrine, p. 265; The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 24.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 391-393.

³R. F. Horton, Op. Cit., p. 234-235. F. R. M. Hitchcock also attributes to Dale, wrongly, the idea that the Atonement fundamentally is Christ paying a debt to the ideal law of righteousness, The Atonement And Modern Thought; London: Wells Gardner, Darton and Co., Ltd., 1911, p. 161.

imposed by abstract law but in His personal punishment, that this punishment still stems from the inevitable anger or resentment of God by which He is obliged to act, and it seems therefore, by definition, that such a theory is unsuitable.¹ Dr. Lidgett believes that despite Dale's discussion of the nature of the eternal law of righteousness, while God does not claim something on the grounds of personal rights or in the interests of His government, God pays something as a tribute to the law which is independent of Him yet alive in Him; and, that therefore despite himself Dale advances a theory in which suffering is imposed by the Father and borne by the Son in a form of legal transaction, apparently.² Dr. Tymms finds that Dale stresses the penal aspect of the Atonement unduly thereby minimizing the fact that it is a manifestation of divine love.³ Dr. Stevens believes that Dale puts forward only a variation of the traditional penal view not as abandoning Christ to the divine displeasure but to suffering in bearing the world's sin, and that a ransom was paid thereby to the law in the death of Christ; though he acknowledges that Dale rejects the idea of penal equivalence.⁴ Dr. Moberly, after suggesting that Dale's treatise is much stronger on the vindication of the objective fact of the Atonement than of its explanation, says that the rationale of Dale's view is that Christ being made sin for us suffered in our stead the actual punishment of sin and that this constituted the

¹A. M. Fairbairn, "Dale As A Theologian", in A. W. W. Dale, The Life Of R. W. Dale, third edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899, p. 713-715.

²J. Scott Lidgett, Op. Cit., p. 158, 164, 168, 169.

³T. V. Tymms, The Christian Idea Of The Atonement; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1904, p. 176, 179-182.

⁴G. B. Stevens, Op.Cit., p. 51, 124, 192, 323.

ground on which moral justice could and did grant forgiveness. The punishment inflicted on Christ in Dale's theory is quantitative or equational as a retaliatory infliction from without by another, so that forgiveness becomes simply the non-infliction of penalty.¹ Dr. Rashdall, whose criticisms of Dale are probably the most violent, believes that Dale simply advocated a retributive theory of punishment in the Atonement in such a way that the punishment of the guilty came upon Christ the innocent, i.e., the doctrine of vicarious punishment. When Dale says that the Atonement fulfills the principle that suffering is the just desert of sin, argues Dr. Rashdall, then if this means (a) that one man's suffering is the just desert of another's sin then it is immoral; or (b) that the sinner's suffering is the just desert of the sinner's sin then such is not fulfilled by substitutionary sacrifice or punishment. In the strictest sense Dr. Rashdall attributes to Dale a theory of immoral penal substitution.² Dr. Grensted cannot escape, he says, the conclusion that despite Dale's qualifications his language is still that of those theories which advance the idea of vicarious punishment.³ In his criticisms of Dale's theory Dr. Hughes fails to see how Dale can avoid the criticisms that are usually made of the traditional theories because, on the one hand, of the moral problem of postulating the necessity of punishing sin, and, on the other, the psychological problem of transferring punishment to Christ from the guilty.⁴

¹R. C. Moberly, Op. Cit., p. 391-394.

²Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 422-426, 493-496.

³L. W. Grensted, Op. Cit., p. 320.

⁴T. H. Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 82.

Also, upon an examination of Denney's teaching on the Atonement we are struck at first sight by the apparent emphasis placed on juridical categories, for example, sin and condemnation, he says is a judicial problem and the solution must also be judicial, therefore, release from condemnation must proceed not over but through judgment.¹ Love is conditioned by judgment.² The Cross is the counterpart of the condemnation under which the world lies, he declares, and we may posit this in three ways: first, Christ died the death of sin;³ second, Christ bore the consequences of sin or bore our sins, and this is precisely the same as to say that He died for our sins;⁴ and third, Christ suffered the curse of the law.⁵ Dr. Stevens is quick to notice this trend of thought and use of terminology and decides that as sin, guilt, and punishment are dominant themes Denney advocates the traditional substitutionary type of theory, despite Denney's expression of surprise in The Atonement And The Modern Mind that his views had been interpreted as legal and forensic.⁶ Dr. Rashdall is as severe on Denney as he is on Dale, declaring, contrary to Denney's views, that he teaches the idea of the propitiation or placating of God (by another) before forgive-

¹Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", p. 590; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 220.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 265-267, 329-330.

³Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", p. 613; The Death Of Christ, p. 212-215; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 72; Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends; London: Hodder and Stoughton, (n.d.), p. 114; Studies In Theology, p. 104.

⁴Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 104; The Death Of Christ, p. 99, 129; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 84; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 163-164, 251.

⁵Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 156; "Curse", Op. Cit., p. 535; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 262.

⁶G. B. Stevens, Op. Cit., p. 194-197. Note also W. Russell Maltby, Christ And His Cross; London: The Epworth Press, 1936, p. 118, 133-134.

ness is granted.¹ Dr. Grensted charges that Denney employs the idea of substitution without reserve in such a way that moral considerations have no place till an external, objective propitiation for sins has been made, though he thinks that a broader more vital aspect of Denney's theory shines through in his later books which, while they are consistent with his earlier books, largely mitigates the rigour of the penal theory.² Dr. Mackintosh criticizes what he calls the rigidly penal character of Christ's death in Denney's books, and he too finds a tempering process in the later writings.³ Dr. Hughes thinks that Denney has not evaded the post-Reformation problem of a conflict in the divine attributes by the statement that in atonement God takes part with sinners against Himself, and if, as Denney says, the death of Christ was a moral as well as physical experience it is difficult to reconcile the denial that Christ suffered the punishment of a guilty conscience.⁴

While there are some writers who acknowledge that Forsyth attempts to develop a theory along moral and personal lines, he too is criticized frequently for the penal terminology which pervades his books. The fact that the law of God is fulfilled in judgment on Christ is defined in a number of ways: Holiness must have its due under the conditions of sin

¹Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 187, 439.

²L. W. Grensted, Op. Cit., p. 322-324. Note also F. R. M. Hitchcock, Op. Cit., p. 185-186.

³Robert Mackintosh, Historic Theories Of The Atonement; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920, p. 285-296, and on Dale, 201-205.

⁴T. H. Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 91.

and judgment;¹ the broken law must be upheld in a practical and adequate recognition of judgment;² the judgment which came upon Christ was penal in that it was due in the moral order to sin;³ and Christ died the death of sin experiencing all the horror of death and the meanness of sin.⁴ Canon Mozley, who is one of Forsyth's most sympathetic expositors, holds that the retention of such penal ideas and terminology causes a great obscurity in Forsyth's writings. What does it mean, he asks, to say that God judged Christ in the sinner's stead?⁵ Dr. Hughes puts Forsyth down as a hesitant believer in penal substitution and suggests that his thought moves on the juristic plane in which no satisfactory view of the Atonement can be reached.⁶ Mr. Escott, as already noted, is certain that Forsyth's position involves a dichotomy between love and holiness, and that fundamentally Forsyth is advocating a transactional theory which operates outside personality.⁷ G. O. Griffith agrees with this judgment stating that Forsyth overstressed the terminology of the Cross and that he failed to overcome an implicit transactionalism.⁸ And Dr. Bradley, a recent interpreter and enthusiastic supporter, hesitates to follow Forsyth without reserve because of his use of penal language.⁹

¹Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. viii, 39; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 368-369; The Justification Of God, p. 11.

²Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 86; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 28; The Work Of Christ, p. 126, 228 ff; The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 29-30; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 332; The Church And The Sacraments; London: The Independent Press Ltd., 1947, p. 5.

³Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 84-85; Missions In State And Church, p. 17, 77; The Work Of Christ, p. 147, 160, 243; The Justification Of God, p. 183; The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 101, 182.

⁴Forsyth, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 17, 22-23, 30, 32; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 29.

⁵J. K. Mozley, Op. Cit., p. 188-189. Note also The Heart Of The Gospel; London: S. P. C. K., 1925, p. 84.

⁶T. H. Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 44-46.

⁷H. Escott, Op. Cit., p. 28.

⁸G. O. Griffith, The Theology Of P. T. Forsyth; London: Lutterworth Press, 1948, p. 93.

⁹W. L. Bradley, P. T. Forsyth; London: Independent Press Ltd., 1952, p. 173.

IV

In the light of these criticisms and the fact, as we shall show later, of no little confusion among critics on precisely what these men were aiming at, what can we say in their defense and for their vindication? It is necessary now for us to set down certain basic principles and issues out of which the fundamental revision of existing forms of thought which is here claimed to be the point of their theories emerges. That they were men of their age and associations, hedged about not only by the philosophical, scientific, and theological crises of their time, but also by the penal forms of thought which provided the rationale of so much orthodox theology is clear; what we shall endeavour to assess now is to what extent they burst these barriers to explore new and what must have seemed like wildly speculative, if not dangerous theological ideas.

1. It is crucial to an understanding of their direction of thought in framing a theory of the Atonement to comprehend what they meant by revelation for on this hinges their whole approach and insight. That their many critics have either completely failed to grasp what these men said was the nature of revelation, or, if the critics do approach this insight they fail to relate it at specific points to a developed theory of the Atonement will be manifest as this argument unfolds. The indulgence of the reader is begged also to grant the writer, for the sake of the argument, the position which is taken on their doctrine of revelation here and in Chapter II in the bare statement of it, with the promise that a vindication from the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth will follow in Chapter III. Revelation is primarily God

disclosing His will and purpose to men by His activity among and on behalf of His own and then inspiring men to comprehend the significance of those events through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis must fall on divine acts, that is, on events within their historical context seen by devout minds to signify the activity of deity. The truth of the Christian revelation for the Christian arises from his experience of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit (this is particularly true of the doctrine of the Atonement) and the same truth is verifiable within the context of the believing Christian's life in all he knows of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Thus the truth of what the Atonement or any other doctrine is emerges not from a context of revealed, propositional truth, but of what Christ is to him. And this is precisely what the Bible is -- it is a record of prophetic and apostolic witness to the knowledge and experience of God in Christ. The Bible bears witness to certain divinely interpreted divine acts in the experience of men. Jesus Christ Himself in His person and work, who as the Son of God came into the world as a real man to live a genuine human existence, is the classical example of such an event and its interpretation (though in this case God Himself comes incarnate), and it was in what Christ was to His followers and did for them that they came, largely after His Ascension, to recognize more fully who He was and what He had accomplished. Thus, what follows will depend upon this conception that God acts in creation and redemption and that the key to revelation is the apprehension of the significance of the divine activity by men who through faith and the work of the Holy Spirit see what God is doing not by what He has said in words but spoken in deeds.

A clear parallel may be drawn between the views enunciated by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, and the central feature of the doctrine more recently developed by Dr. Hodgson who says that God reveals Himself not in a form of words to be accepted unquestioningly, but "by doing certain particular things in the history of the world and inspiring certain men to see the significance of certain events as acts of God."¹

2. Evil and sin must be reckoned with as the radical, irrational realities that they are with a refusal to compromise either their effects in the world and men, or the necessity for action in dealing with them. No theory of the Atonement will meet either the requirements of the biblical, historical, or contemporary experiential accounts of the world's condition and the human predicament unless evil and sin are taken seriously.

3. The reality and importance of the moral community of which God and man form a part cannot be avoided or minimized. The wrath of God is an essential element of this idea, and the divine judgments against sin a fact of experience commensurate with what we already know of human family and societal relationships. The aim of God is the creation of a moral community of free persons in fellowship with Himself and each other, who voluntarily devote themselves to the divine ideal of maximizing truth, goodness and beauty in the universe. There is a moral necessity laid upon God and man in interpersonal societal relations not only to educate by discipline and guidance, but also to disapprove acts and punish conduct which aims at the dissolution of the community and the frustration of the divine purpose.

¹Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957, Vol. II, p. 3.

4. The work of atonement and reconciliation must take into account not only the question of human sin but also the broader, perplexing question of the existence of evil in the universe. Atonement ought to be thought of not primarily as individual but universal and then as relevant to the individual because it is universal. In some sense Atonement must redeem not only man from sin but the world order from the power of evil, and transform what now militates against good for its achievement. The relevance of the Cross must be universal.

5. In the nature of the case, therefore, what is needed is a work which will be final in its character as well as universal in its scope to win the moral victory over evil once for all. We require a finished work, and objective Atonement, which will deal with the disruption of the moral order and the power of evil whether or not men as individuals respond, though this latter point is involved also in the work which Christ does. In the moral world we deal with moral acts and the Cross is in some sense a divine act which is final as the divine victory over evil once the conditions of the conflict are known so that the sins of the past, present, and future are atoned for.

6. But this finished, objective work cannot be conceived of as being on the one hand outside man and irrelevant to him as man because it is so uniquely divine; nor on the other as objective and finished so that human response is made unnecessary or virtually meaningless. The relation of the Atonement to the race must be direct within the limits set by the nature of God and man and the moral community of which they form a part, so that the freedom of man is preserved in the application of redemption to the race. We affirm and must maintain

both the freedom of God and the freedom of man. Also, redemption cannot be thought of as achieved simply by Incarnation, i.e., by the mere fact that Christ has become man; nor by absorption, i.e., that in Incarnation man has been assimilated to God; but within the sphere of personal relations. Reconciliation may best be described not in ontological but teleological categories; it occurs not within the sphere of metaphysical ideas but of moral action.

7. Love cannot be thought of in vacuo and forgiveness as necessary apart from cost. Real forgiveness, the kind that not only reveals love but a love bearing wrong, is always tragic. We maintain here that the universal experience of mankind is that forgiveness costs. Every remission of sin imperils the sanctity of the moral order unless he who remits suffers something, i.e., absorbs the evil and transforms the power of it for good. We cannot think that forgiveness cost the Father nothing.

8. Any solution to the doctrine of the Atonement must take into account the relations of the persons of the Trinity so that in our development of a theory we recognize in the case of each Person of the Trinity that we are dealing with God. Jesus Christ was God manifest among men as a man in a genuine human life. Dale is right therefore in stressing that "the relations between man and God have their ultimate ground in the eternal relations between the Eternal Word and the Father;"¹ for, on the one hand what He does is God's act and on the other the perfection of a fully human life acting in accordance with the divine will. Temporal societal relations and those of men to God rest in the eternal relations of the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

¹Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 150; cf. The Atonement, p. 5-7, and Preface, p. xxix.

9. Beyond the foregoing point, we need to take into account the nature of God as sovereign, free, and all-wise as this bears on the problem of the existence of evil as a consequent irrational element in the universe. In other words we are driven to asking, What does evil mean for God as the omnipotent and omniscient Creator of the Universe Who is aiming to bring about the creation of a community of free persons in fellowship with Himself? And the force of the question cannot be avoided in any doctrine of the Atonement. Therefore the Cross must in some sense be not only a means for redeeming the world and man, but it must also be the divine theodicy.

10. Finally, the Atonement flows from the love and grace of God, it does not procure them. Love is the great reality of the world. The coming of Christ demonstrates and flows from that love and it is not true therefore that in any sense the love of God is bought, won, or achieved. In atonement we do not deal in transactional, juridical categories finally, but in the personal relations existing between a personal Creator and the free, perfected personalities He wishes to win for them in fellowship with Himself; "God so loved that He gave" is the central truth of Christianity.

Now that we have cleared the ground and established certain principles which bear directly on the doctrine of the Atonement -- principles which require us to take seriously both the Godward and manward relations of Christ's work, both its relation to the world and the race -- we may now state in brief compass what is the solution to the doctrine to which Dale, Denney, and Forsyth are driven. It is

simply, that the significance of the Atonement must be sought in the meaning of a paradox which is fundamental to the Christian's understanding of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in his experience of redeeming grace, namely, that in atonement it is both true to say that God Himself bears the responsibility for the conditions in which evil and sin could arise and for their consequences in the world order, and to say that in atonement God gives or sacrifices His Son for the redemption of the world. We will show that in the narrower sense the objective element is the first part of the paradox and that the subjective element is the second but, in fact, it is impossible to make any final division for each side is involved in both the Godward and manward relations.

In particular, the idea that God gives or sacrifices His Son has relevance to the existence of evil and sin in the world, the human predicament, and the vindication of divine holiness not over but through judgment. We have already elucidated the ways in which Dale, Denney, and Forsyth portray this truth primarily in penal substitutionary categories; but, is it necessary to avoid such terminology, rather, would there not be a great deal lost which stands at the heart of Christianity by doing so? In fact, it is maintained here that the terminology is largely consistent -- in the light of the precautions by which it is hedged about -- both with the doctrine of revelation and atonement which they put forward.

When we recognize that in Christ God was manifest in the flesh for a redeeming act and that the purposes of God in vindicating righteousness are mediated to us and revealed in the divine activity, then we learn that what such penal terminology is really driving at is not

the strictness of mathematical, penal equivalents, but the truth that just as only God could signify the nature of sin and its just punishment in the revelation of an act of judgment, so only He can signify the nature of the act and perform it -- which act we know to be the Cross -- which makes atonement, accomplishes reconciliation, and grants forgiveness. What the New Testament metaphors and images and the traditional penal terminology of post-Reformation Christianity convey for Dale, Denney, and Forsyth is that when it is said that God gives or sacrifices His Son this means that only one divine act can be equal to or commensurate with another. Such terms as "homage to law", "equal intensity", "judgment and curse of law" and "penalty and death of sin" while, on the one hand, they are ambiguous and clearly in the tradition of the older penal transactional theories, on the other, they are interpreted by them within the context of divine acts and are but human descriptions of what is divine activity not of what is a technical, juridical transaction involving a dealing between God, Christ, the law, and man as separate parties in a proceeding of litigation.

We have already shown that the essence of sin is moral act directed against God and the moral order in which God and man have a common life, and that the divine judgment which is directed against sin is the revelation of a divine act; but some reinforcement of the latter will be deemed needful here. "Every act of God must contain a revelation of God",¹ Dale says. When the precepts of the divine law are violated it was for Him "to mark the true significance of the offense"² and this

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 257.

²Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 23.

God has done for "the act of God in punishing wrong-doing is an act by which the Creator himself asserts the authority of the law which His creature has insulted and defied."¹ Also, he writes that "the punishment of sin is a divine act", and, "whatever moral element there is in punishment itself -- as punishment -- is derived from the person or power that inflicts it."² Denney interprets the faith of St. Paul as being in a living, acting, personal God who does give up men to wrath when they persist in sin,³ and Forsyth declares that fundamentally judgment is between persons, between man who is guilty and God who acts in judgment.⁴ It is simply a part of human moral experience to acknowledge the necessity of judgment both in human society and in the relations man sustains to God. We recall Dale's words that the concept of punishment must satisfy our strongest moral convictions, and correspond to the place it must hold both in the organization of society and in the moral order of the universe, as pain and loss inflicted for wrongdoing.⁵ This is fundamentally an appeal based on the moral convictions of men which witness to the fact that sin deserves punishment, and on the moral convictions of the Christian conscience in which it is recognized that the universe reacts to sin, and that the final understanding of this is that God has acted in a way commensurate both with righteousness and the quality and magnitude of the evil in punishing it.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 24.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 386, 391.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 144. Note also "Principal Forsyth On Preaching", British Weekly, October 24, 1907, p. 58-59.

⁴Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 180.

⁵Dale, The Atonement, p. 383.

⁶Ibid., p. 389. cf. Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 187-188, 195, 201, 203-204; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 45; and, Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 333; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 22, 24.

As sin and guilt are real experiences within a moral order in which God is acting for the final good of man and judgment is disclosed to the conscience as a divine act, what is needed is another divine act which will be equal to the human predicament. Forsyth says "sin is action, and action is its cure;"¹ "guilt is therefore the last problem of the race, its one central moral crisis; and the cross that destroys it is the race's historic crisis and turningpoint;"² and, "the Cross is (1) the holy act of grace and revelation through Christ to us; (2) the act of judgment on Christ for the world; (3) the act of judgment by Christ on the world."³ Denney describes the work of Christ as "a work which this transcendent, living, personal God actually achieves; it has been wrought by Him for sinners."⁴ The divine necessity for a career of suffering for our Lord, he says, arose as much from the inner compulsion to perform God's will as it did from the malignant outward necessities by which He was encompassed and which He must subdue.⁵ The response of Christ to the will of God in sacrifice was an ethical act as a response to the divine mind in its judgment of sin.⁶ The following quotation is slanted strongly with

¹Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 190. cf. The British Weekly, Oct. 31, 1907, p. 83.

²Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 19.

³Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 77.

⁴Denney, Questions Of Faith, p. 162.

⁵Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 29-30; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 81.

⁶Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 167-168, 328; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 84; and, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 213.

this emphasis as Denney discusses the sinful woman who wept at the feet of Jesus,

Here He appears in act as the minister and mediator of reconciliation, and when we realize what He is doing, the possibility, the reality, and the nature of reconciliation are made plain to us.¹

He says that the atoning death of Christ is the heart of revelation; it is an act which is immediately transparent to thought as correspondent to the world's need,

The atoning death of Christ, as a revelation of God, is a thing so intelligible, so correspondent to a universal need ... It is the very heart of revelation itself.²

This conception of the Atonement as a divine act commensurate with the problems of evil and sin is also made clear, finally, in these words,

Our Lord's passion is His sublimest action -- an act so potent that all His other actions are sublated in it, and we know everything when we know that He died for our sins.³

But the clearest and most self-conscious movement in this direction is the argument which lies at the heart of Dale's theory where it is presented in the following form to show that just as the condemnation of sin is a divine act so the act to redeem which meets the condemnation is divine, and both are known for their quality and effectiveness in the experience of the man who knows the redeeming

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 13-14.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 118.

³Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 109.

love of God in Christ by revelation,

But if the punishment of sin is a Divine act -- an act in which the identity between the will of God and the eternal Law of Righteousness is asserted and expressed -- it would appear that, if in any case the penalties of sin are remitted, some other Divine act of at least equal intensity, and in which the ill desert of sin is expressed with at least equal energy, must take its place.

The heart of the whole problem lies here. The eternal Law of Righteousness declares that sin deserves to be punished. The will of God is identified both by the conscience and the religious intuitions of man with the eternal Law of Righteousness. To separate the ideal law -- or any part of it -- from the Living and Divine Person, is to bring darkness and chaos on the moral and spiritual universe. The whole Law -- the authority of its precepts, the justice of its penalties -- must be asserted in the Divine acts, or else the Divine Will cannot be perfectly identified with the eternal Law of Righteousness. If God does not assert the principle that sin deserves punishment by punishing it, He must assert that principle in some other way. Some divine act is required which shall have all the moral worth and significance of the act by which the penalties of sin would have been inflicted on the sinner.

The Christian Atonement is the fulfillment of that necessity ...¹

The implications of this quotation for both the objective and subjective sides of the Atonement will occupy us throughout the remainder of this essay; here, however it is important to notice that Dale was aware both of the tautological form of his argument and that he had rested his case wholly on the form of revelation which provides an elucidation of the terms of the tautology and meaning to both sides of the paradox which we hold comprises the central problem of the Atonement.

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 391-392. cf. "The Expiatory Theory Of The Atonement", p. 500-502.

In a footnote to the foregoing he writes,

As much as this might be concluded a priori. The form in which the necessity has actually been met could never have entered into the mind of man, nor could we have determined whether it was possible for the necessity to have been met in any other form.¹

Admittedly, this is grounding the argument on a tautology, namely that in the nature of the case one act is commensurate with another; but, can we escape the form of the argument -- indeed, need we try -- in the light of the character of revelation? This involves us in the problem of the nature of both the formal and material elements of revelation so that the vindication of the form of the argument must lie in an elucidation of the terms of the tautology to show what they mean and we do this as the truth of the divine acts has come home to us as the Holy Spirit has led the Church into a fuller and richer understanding of the meaning of Christ's Cross. Thus, we may expect to find that revelation discloses to us the meaning of the redemptive act through the Holy Spirit as the divine theodicy in the light of the existence of evil and sin in the world and the need for redeeming the world and mankind from the condemnation and power of sin; and, also, that the relevance of this act to man and its implementation is achieved in a way that is both moral and personal without jeopardizing the freedom which is man's crown and God's purpose for him. This we will now proceed to unfold by concluding this chapter with an exposition of what is meant by the objective element, i.e., the fact that God Himself in Christ bears the evil; and, by discussing in Chapter II the

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 391.

significance of the second part of the paradox, i.e., that God gave or sacrificed His Son for us. But before this, it is needful to survey what account has been taken by a number of critics of the key ideas we have just presented.

There is no small confusion among the critics of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth about the nature, but more particularly the significance and relevance, of the objective element which we have noted, namely, that in atonement God Himself bears the judgment of sin if, indeed, they recognize it to be the objective element. We shall deal only with those bearing upon the objective element here, reserving those that bear on the relevance of these theories to the world and men for discussion in the next chapter.

Apart from his criticism of Dale's theory that God and the law are separated, Dr. Horton cannot see "the intrinsic reasonableness of suffering Himself, instead of inflicting, the punishment, or how from self-inflicted pain He derives the power to forgive sins."¹ Dr. Fairbairn appreciates the fact that Dale is influenced more by personal than by legal concepts, but he interprets Dale as resting his theory on the proposition that there is a greater moral significance in God punishing as a person than that punishment be exercised by abstract law, and, that redemption rests simply on a mystical union of the believer with Christ.² Dr. Lidgett misses Dale's point on two counts by saying, first, that the objective element consists of

¹R. F. Horton, Op. Cit., p. 197.

²A.M. Fairbairn, Op. Cit., p. 714-717.

suffering which is imposed by the Father and borne by the Son and, second, that God pays this in tribute to law.¹ One of Dr. Stevens' criticisms of both Dale and Denney is that they advance hazy interpretations of the penal theory which are not consistent with the traditional forms of the doctrine, apparently implying that unfortunately Dale and Denney did not advance theories which are readily classifiable into neat historical categories,² and we have already noted that Dr. Moberly and Dr. Rashdall interpret Dale as advocating a strict penal transactional theory missing, evidently, the central objective element. Dr. Rashdall adds that Dale commits the logical fallacy of assuming "that salvation through a crucified Saviour is the same theory as salvation through the crucifixion of that Saviour."³ Dr. Mackintosh finds it incredible that Dale should have chosen the language of penal substitution in the light of his premises nor does he think that Denney's idea of Christ bearing instead of inflicting the punishment yields any fruitful meaning.⁴ Canon Mozley rightly finds that the central element of Forsyth's theory is that the Atonement is an act of God in virtue of certain moral elements such as sacrifice and obedience, and confession and judgment, but he fails to give an accounting of the rationale of the central, objective element either in itself or in respect of the Trinity, or fully in the manward relation.⁵ Dr. Cave fails to comprehend the meaning of Dale's

¹J. Scott Lidgett, Op. Cit., p. 158, 168-169.

²G. B. Stevens, Op. Cit., p. 352, 385.

³Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 426.

⁴Robert Mackintosh, Op. Cit., p. 204, 290.

⁵J. K. Mozley, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 184 ff; and, The Heart Of The Gospel, p. 81-84.

statement that God bore the penalty, and similarly Dr. Hughes thinks that Dale's statement that God bore the penalty, Denney's that God took sides with us against Himself, and Forsyth's that God Himself made the Atonement are either logically meaningless or psychologically incredible.¹ Two criticisms which are perhaps the most serious of those levelled, first, by Dr. Moberly against Dale in the illustration of the father cutting off his own finger to show his displeasure at his son's evil, and, second, the charge by several writers that Dale and Denney advance forms of the Grotian governmental theory will occupy our attention shortly.

¹P. H. Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 45, 82, 91. Note also "Dr. Forsyth's View Of The Atonement", The Congregational Quarterly, January, 1940, p. 30-37.

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What we believe about Christ arises both from what the Church has experienced of Christ and come to believe about Him through the witness of the New Testament Christians and from what we know of Christ ourselves. That we believe He was God incarnate arises from the fact that we can conceive of no other person doing what He has done for the salvation of the world. The idea of grounding the primary elements of Christian belief about Christ in the apprehension of what God was doing in Him figures prominently in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. It was through the activity of Christ during His lifetime, in His death and resurrection, and in the mission of the Holy Spirit that the early disciples came into a fuller understanding of who He was and what He had accomplished.¹

Dale argues that this is the procedure St. Paul adopts in the argument he constructs for the supremacy of Christ in Colossians 1:16 where the actual relations between the Christian and Christ might naturally be developed into the conception of those relations which exist between the whole universe and Christ, and, that this "was made clear and certain to him by the special illumination of the Holy Ghost." Dale continues as follows,

... He, as I think, found the original relation of Christ to the human race and to the universe underlying the relations of Christ to the Church. To him the kingdom of heaven was the revelation of an eternal order. And when I find that in this kingdom Christ is the Moral Ruler, that His voice is the voice of the eternal Law of Righteousness, I am unable to believe that this is a merely contingent and temporary arrangement. I accept it as revealing the original relation between the Eternal Word and the Law of Righteousness.²

¹Dale, Preface, p. xxx ff. cf. Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 317, 327; "Holy Spirit", Dictionary Of Christ And The Gospels, (ed. James Hastings); Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, (n.d.), Vol. 1, p. 731, 742. Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 128-129; "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", p. 119, 130, 134; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 18.

²Dale, Preface, p. xxxi-xxxii; cf. The Atonement, p. 5-7, 251-258; Essays And Addresses, second edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899, p. 245.

With reference to the whole question of revelation and the apprehension of the meaning of the divine acts, it is significant that in the foregoing excerpt Dale makes an important transition from saying what he believes the Pauline understanding of the supremacy of Christ was to what he himself is compelled to believe. In this same connection the importance of the following quotation is such that it must be given in full. Its relevance to the question of the relation of Christ to the universe will be apparent, but also, the mode of revelation through a disclosure of insights by the Holy Ghost to devout minds will be clear. The important question of the relation of Christ to the race on which part of the argument hinges will concern us in the next chapter,

It is probable that the Apostles were led up to this conception of the relation between Christ and the universe by their consciousness of the relation between Christ and themselves, in which they believed that the ideal relation between Christ and the human race was receiving its fulfillment. From the relation between Christ and the human race, the transition to the relation between Christ and the universe was not difficult. The whole conception had an ethical and spiritual -- not merely metaphysical origin. 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.¹

Denney offers an identical argument when discussing the Christocentricity of the Pauline theology, "He was a person so great that St. Paul is obliged to reconstruct his whole world around Him."² The dominant

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 407-408.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 199.

trait of the Christian religion, he says, has always been that in it "Christ was both to God and to man what no other could be, and determined all their mutual relations."¹ At this point we may compare the general approach these writers have taken with what Dr. Hodgson wrote in his recent Gifford lecture,

I have shown how our grasping of the significance of God's action is a process with a history in which in each age men's understanding is conditioned by the outlook of their time and place. I have been arguing that our understanding of the Bible as revelatory depends upon our recognition of Jesus Christ as God personally at work in the history of this world, that to know what is truly of God in the Old Testament, in other teachings ancient and modern, and in successive expositions of Christian faith, we have to ask how far they are consistent with God's revelation of Himself in Christ.²

The crucial fact which emerges for us in thus thinking of Christ is the precise relation He as the Son of God, as God manifest in the flesh, sustains to the moral order of the universe of which we have spoken and in which God and man share a common life. Because Christ is God manifest in the flesh in a redeeming activity, and because the law of God is alive or actively asserted only in God, it is clear that in Christ we confront the sovereign God, the Moral Ruler of the universe; and, that this prerogative has been His from eternity and not achieved or won by Him through the Cross. To say therefore that we are morally responsible to God is the same as declaring that we are morally responsible to Christ, and when we say this we throw the action of the Atonement back upon God as an act within God.³

¹Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, third edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909, p. 408. cf. p. 98.

²Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 88-89.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 361, 363. cf. Preface, p. xxviii.

For the solution, therefore, to the problems which are connected with the Atonement we are compelled to focus attention upon the doctrine of the Trinity because it is in the eternal relations of the Son to the Father and the Holy Spirit that we look for the objective element.¹ In what follows, Forsyth summarizes his doctrine and it will be noticed that his words bear not only upon the objective but also upon the subjective aspect of the Atonement,

The Father who spoke by his prophets must come to save in the Son and must occupy in the Spirit. He offers, gives, Himself in the Son and conveys Himself in the Spirit ... It is all one holy love and grace, in this eternal three-fold action, both within God and upon man. Only in this Trinitarian conception of God can we think of such a salvation as ours.²

The objective element of the Atonement is simply that God is the one who provides it -- He does it -- it is an act by God and within God with reference to the problem of evil and sin. This is why Dale insists that only upon an ontological Trinity, that is, a Trinity in which the relations between the members of the Godhead rest upon an eternal fact in the nature of God, shall we understand what an objective Atonement means. We may describe it, says Denney, as a work outside of us in which God deals in Christ with the sin of the world and thus removes the barrier between Himself and men,

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 5-7. cf. Denney, "Holy Spirit", p. 744.

²Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 327. cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 101; and, The Work Of Christ, p. 152.

Reduced to its simplest expression, what an objective atonement means is that but for Christ and His Passion God would not be to us what He is.¹

In the following, Forsyth maintains that the critical issue of Christianity is the Cross and that the critical issue of the Cross is an action within the divine nature,

To regain our spiritual reality and its moral tone we must go back from our subjective experience, not only to the objectivity of a historic Cross, but to the objectivity and cruciality of God's spiritual action behind that historic Cross, to a central action within His own nature.²

The real, the objective element in the Atonement, he says, is "that God made it and gave it finished to man".³

But we cannot remain content only with identifying the objective element as an action by or within God without pursuing the rationale of the act. What is its significance? What does it mean to say that what was historically offered to God was eternally offered by God.⁴ What do Christians mean when they say that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself?⁵ What does the self-donation of God mean?⁶ Clearly what we are saying is that sin makes a difference to God, i.e., the problem of evil is real not only to us but to Him, and its solution requires action on His part. Dr. Hodgson points out when discussing this problem that what Christians affirm is both

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 237; cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 144-145; and, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 28.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 178.

³Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 93.

⁴Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 40-41.

⁵Forsyth, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 47; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 252; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 29; The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 342-343; The Work Of Christ, p. 152.

⁶Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 259, 372. cf. The Justification Of God, p. 150.

the impassibility and passibility of God; that there is nothing irrational in viewing evil as a practical problem to God, provided we bear in mind that when we speak of God in relation to creation (as we must when discussing the Atonement) we balance it with what God is in Himself.¹ Denney recognizes this problem and distinction when he says that while the New Testament never speaks of God as the object of reconciliation it does not therefore imply that God is purely passive, or impassible, but rather that sin does make a difference to Him and He does have experiences in His love. God is reconciled to us not in the sense that something is won from Him against His will but in the sense that He takes the initiative in redeeming the world.² Our development of what is meant by this central divine act will be made in the form of four main propositions with the addition of a fifth which epitomizes them all in a key concept.

1. The first and most important idea which helps us to understand what the Atonement as an act of God means is that God thereby assumes the responsibility for creating the conditions in which evil has arisen. It is difficult to see how if, on the one hand, the omnipotence and omniscience of God are affirmed, we can evade the conclusion, on the other hand, that evil, even though it is an irrational element, was not foreseen by Him and accepted, may we say, as an element of danger in any plan to create free persons who are in fellowship with Himself; and, that not only was it foreseen as a danger, but that in the Atonement we find God's method of dealing with the evil by actually Himself

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 68-69.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 236-237. cf. Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 28-29; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 94; Rome, Reform And Reaction; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899, p. 218; The Work Of Christ, p. 93-94; and, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 95-103.

assuming its responsibility. It will be recalled that Dr. Hodgson has developed this argument in convincing fashion by accepting contingency and freedom as realities in the type of world God wishes to create and evil as a possible consequent with which God must deal,

Evil, like contingency and freedom, is one of those irrationalities which God allows to exist within His creation, which, within creation must be accepted as a reality to be wrestled with.¹

It is difficult to avoid this idea when reading Dale's development of his doctrine particularly in the light of his insistence, as we shall show next, that in Atonement punisher and punished are one; though a specific development of the idea of God's responsibility is wanting. A movement in the direction of a more conscious grappling with the problem of this responsibility for evil occurs in the writings of Denney and Forsyth. In attempting to define what it means to bear sin Denney says that it is "to underlie its responsibility and to receive its consequences."² The latter idea is as important as the former, as we shall show shortly, but here our interest is in the word "responsibility". And in another place he declares that God in Christ takes the issue of sin to Himself by making "all its burdens and responsibilities His own."³ In the following quotation which clearly sets out this idea, care should be taken to notice Denney's use of the word "whole",

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 44.

²Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 104.

³Denney, Questions Of Faith, p. 174.

in the Person of His Son He enters, if we may say so, into the whole responsibility of the situation created by sin -- which constitutes the death of Jesus a demonstration of divine love, compelling faith and obedience.¹

Probably the obvious difficulties, the almost blasphemous implications, of such an idea prevented Denney from developing suggestions he makes of this doctrine in his writings more fully, so that God is seen to be sovereign not only in His purpose of creating free creatures who will have freedom which they may misuse, but in doing so He is prepared to take the risks involved and the consequences which follow as well, and that He has done this in Christ on the Cross. Something of this hesitance, this dallying with an idea which has unusual possibilities for development, may be seen in the following extract from a letter to Dr. Carnegie Simpson on the subject of the divine providence written two years before Denney's death,

I have often wondered whether we might not say that the Christian doctrine of the Atonement just meant that in Christ God took the responsibility of evil upon Himself and somehow subsumed evil under good ... I fancy it was something like this Calvin had in mind when he said that God did not make His noblest creature ambiguo fine, without knowing what for, i.e. He was quite prepared to take all the consequences, and He took them in Christ. But who is sufficient for these things ...²

As in the case of Dale, so with Forsyth this idea emerges from the general position he takes, rather than as a fully enunciated doctrine. The Father, he says, did not suffer as the Son but with the Son and it cost Him at least as much as the Son;³ also, "God made the first

¹Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 91-92.

²Denney, Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 187-188.

³Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 28-29.

sacrifice, to which all man's sacrifices are but response."¹ The way in which Forsyth conceives of this is primarily that the Cross is the divine theodicy and he uses such terms as the divine self-reconciliation, self-satisfaction, and self-justification. But with Denney, he is not afraid to say that the essence of Atonement is its solution to the problems created by freedom where in grace God takes the risks and consequences of creating man free,

We are born into a redeemed world. We are created for redemption, created by One who knew in creating that He had in Himself all the resources wherewith to deal with freedom's abuse of His creation.²

The similarity between these statements and the doctrine that Dr. Hodgson has more recently developed into a theology fully conscious of what contingency, freedom, and evil must mean to God in the Atonement is manifest. The Atonement, Dr. Hodgson has written, solves more than the problem of human sin because that issue is taken up in the larger problem of evil, and the Atonement is God's solution to the irrationality of evil providing a basis of change in the world which will make it transparent to thought.³ The question is not whether we by this idea blasphemously blame God for something His holiness finds grotesque and repugnant, but whether we will allow Him (and this we must see as an essential element of the Christian revelation) to claim the responsibility Himself in His infinite love on the Cross.

2. But beyond this idea that in Atonement God accepts the responsibility for creating the very conditions in which evil and sin arise, the Atonement also involves God's acceptance upon Himself of the evil issue, the dreadful consequences, of sin in the judgment which must be executed against it. Here we must face the fact again that acts of sin

¹Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 94; cf. Rome, Reform And Reaction, p. 218.

²Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 184.

³Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 68 ff.

cannot simply be waived; the requirements both of the nature of God and of the moral order in which He and man share their life demands the just punishment of sin. Dr. Hodgson names four theories of punishment: the retributive, vindictive, deterrent, and reformation.¹ It is true, he declares, that sin must be punished in such a way as to deter men from following bad examples, and to win sinners back from their evil ways;² but, it is also true that punishment is retrospective and retributive (in the sense of an action on a past deed) and vindictive (in the sense of vindicating a standard). The freedom of the individual must be balanced by the freedom of the community to disown and disapprove acts against itself by its members by means of inflicting pain. It is this bearing the just deserts of sin, i.e., the vindication of righteousness and retribution falling upon the sinner for evil-doing, with which we are concerned here, quite apart from the impingement of such an action upon either evil or good as powers in the universe.

Clearly it is in this connection that Dale's presentation takes on its most pronounced juridical and, what appears to some, Grotian form. In a noteworthy sermon entitled "The Living God The Saviour Of All Men" which he preached before the Directors of the London Missionary Society in 1864, Dale declared that the Atonement was primarily an act of homage to law. When the precepts of the law were violated, he said, it was God's place to mark the significance of the offense by the imposition of suffering and not to aggravate the insult by forgetting it. This suffering is the sign and proof of God's unswerving fidelity

¹ Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 55 ff.

² Ibid., p. 69.

to the principles of eternal righteousness. And the critical point of Dale's theory, as we have already said, is that just as God has acted to mark the nature of the offense by inflicting punishment, so now in Christ He has acted to bear it Himself,

From none but God Himself can the moral law, which it is for Him to maintain, receive satisfaction when its authority has been insulted by His creatures ... Instead of fulfilling His high responsibilities by inflicting suffering, He has assumed our nature that He Himself may suffer.¹

It is a mistake, he adds, to affirm that God, due to the severity and intensity of His vindictive justice, would not forgive man until His wrath was appeased or the claims of the law satisfied by the agony of an innocent substitute for it is God Himself whom we see in Gethsemane and on the Cross,

The principles of eternal righteousness would have been abundantly honoured if the Creator had punished His guilty creatures; but they received more august and solemn homage: He who would have discharged all claims upon Him by causing sorrow and shame to descend upon others, stoops Himself to bear the burden of mysterious and inconceivable woe.²

That this is also the central idea of his lectures The Atonement is abundantly clear.³ The unique and original relation of Christ to the

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 24-25.

²Ibid., p. 25.

³"He by whose power the sentence must have been executed -- He Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, laid aside His eternal glory, assumed our nature, was forsaken of God, died on the cross, that the sins of men might be remitted. It belonged to Him to assert, by His own act that suffering is the just result of sin. He asserts it, not by inflicting suffering on the sinner, but by enduring suffering Himself," p. 392.

eternal law of righteousness in virtue of which He is Himself the Moral Ruler of the universe enables Him to be both judge and victim,

The mysterious unity of the Father and the Son rendered it possible for God at once to endure and to inflict the penalty, and to do both under the conditions which constitute the infliction and the endurance the grandest moment in the moral history of God.¹

This same doctrine recurs frequently in Dale's other writings, for example: "He had resolved not to maintain it in this case by inflicting just penalties on those who had sinned, He came into the world Himself ... the suffering of Christ was the act of the Eternal Spirit,"² and, "In that death He Himself in the person of the Son endured loss and suffering ... the Son endured loss and suffering on account of human sin instead of inflicting them."³

When we turn to Denney we discover a similar emphasis on the idea that in Atonement punisher and punished are one. Beyond the fact that God's mercy comes to us not over but through judgment⁴ we need to remember, he says, that it is God who comes in Christ to make the judgment and burden of sin His own,⁵

Christ is not the instrument, but the agent, of the Father in all that He does. The motive in which God acts is the motive in which He acts: the Father and the Son are at one in the work of man's salvation.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 393.

²Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 212-213.

³Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 269.

⁴Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 220.

⁵Denney, Questions Of Faith, p. 174.

⁶Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 125.

Christ's death was a judgment death, he says, because in His death on the Cross He was identified, or He identified Himself, under the divine dispensation with the doom of sin.¹

An identical demand for the vindication of righteousness compels Forsyth to declare that the primary action of Christ's death was in regard to the divine holiness,

I have sought to construe the satisfaction to a holy God as consisting only in a counterpart and equal holiness rendered under the conditions of sin and judgment.²

Forsyth finds in the life of Christ an adequate recognition of the violated law of God as an end in itself and thus a divine satisfaction,³ but not simply as a recognition of law but as a satisfaction or vindication of it.⁴ In the following Forsyth emphasizes again the necessity which is laid upon God to vindicate righteousness by judging sin,

There are debts which cannot simply be written off and left unrecovered. There is a spiritual order whose judgments are the one guarantee for mankind and its future. That law of holiness can by no means whatever be either warned off or bought off in its claim. God cannot simply waive it as to the past, nor is it enough if he simply declare it for all time. In His own eternal nature it has an undying claim to which He must give effect in due judgment somewhere, if He is to redeem a world. The enforcement of God's holiness by judgment is as essential to a universal and eternal Fatherhood as is the outflow of His love.⁵

Christ bore this judgment as God manifest in the flesh because only God could pay the cost He never incurred.⁶ This same idea which we

¹Denney, "Curse", Op. Cit., p. 535. cf. Studies In Theology, p. 155; and, The Death Of Christ, p. 97-99.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 368. cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. viii, 39.

³Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 86.

⁴Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 126. cf. p. 228 ff.

⁵Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 29-30.

⁶Ibid., p. 36.

have traced through Dale And Denney that in Atonement punisher and punished are one receives frequent notice in Forsyth's writings as well in a variety of forms. "The agent of judgment," he says, "becomes the object of judgment, and so becomes the agent of salvation,"¹ and,

Grace could only be perfectly revealed in an act of judgment -- though inflicted on Himself by the Judge. Atonement to God must be made, and it was only possible from God.²

God's holiness was not to be mocked, rather God "actually took His own judgment to save it. He spared not His own Son -- His own self."³ It is in our apprehension of the fact that only God can finally satisfy the demands of holiness that we approach the objective element of the Atonement,

None but God Himself can do justice to Himself. None but the Holy can satisfy the holy and eternal, unquenchable demand. It is only God as the Holy atoning Son that can do justice to the Holy Father, or satisfy the changeless conditions of a perfectly Holy God in a guilty world.⁴

The exhibition of the foregoing evidence from the writings of these three theologians substantiating the claim that they maintain that God Himself in Christ is both punisher and punished, judge and victim, has followed from their conviction that in a moral community of which God and man form a part sin must be punished. Dr. Hodgson has similarly maintained that punishment is necessary because men are sinners who are

¹Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 81.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 365. cf. The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 85; and, The Work Of Christ, p. 82-83.

³Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 169.

⁴Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 190. cf. The Justification Of God, p. 37, 120-133.

developing their freedom in an evil-infected world in which each individual draws his life from his membership in the corporate life he shares with others.¹ There emerges here, Dr. Hodgson says, a principle of collective responsibility, and it is this that we have traced in the writings of these three men who support the idea that in a morally constituted world sin must be punished. God can neither connive in the sinful act nor exhibit a spirit of angry vengeance; but He must vindicate righteousness and disapprove the wrong, and He has done it by Himself bearing the stroke of punishment. Dr. Hodgson writes,

God has revealed Himself to us as accepting -- or, perhaps we should say, as claiming, or assuming -- the responsibility involved in willing to create free beings. He wills that sin shall be punished, but He does not will that sin shall be punished without also willing that the punishment shall fall on Himself.²

3. A corollary of the foregoing is that God not only bears the evil of punishment upon Himself but that He also bears the dispersed consequences of sin and evil in such a way that the power of evil is frustrated in Him; He absorbs them and transforms their issue for the production of good. We are in fact concerned here with the way both the evil of punishment and the evil of the world are taken by Him. This latter point involves the belief, as we have shown, that the evil of the world is a virile, active power working its destruction throughout nature and in conscious beings and this view of it can be maintained whether or not one believes that evil is headed up in an evil personality such as Satan. But both this power of evil and the power of punishment

¹ Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 59.

² Ibid., p. 77.

to work evil depend largely on how they are taken, i.e., whether the issue of evil is absorbed in such a way by the personality so that its power to work evil is stopped and transmuted for good, or whether it will be allowed not only to infect the personality but also to pass as evil to infect and destroy further both the world and men. What the Atonement tells us, Dr. Hodgson continues, is that in spite of our sins God remains good; they have failed either to make Him a partner in them or to embitter Him as a result.¹ In God evil is vanquished and He remains good to us having borne its full thrust. This idea of God's power to absorb evil without the corruption of His goodness is what we aim to show as a constituent element of the objective theories of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth.

Christ came into the world, wrote Dale, to make the sorrow of the world His own² and in His passion the sufferings were not suppressed nor held back by love, rather, they were asserted in the grandest form possible.³ Vicariousness, he said at the funeral of J. A. James, is the central principle of the divine plan of redemption.⁴ In Denney's writings this principle emerges with greater force and clarity and we find it epitomized in such a declaration as that God has not entered into the battle of good versus evil as a struggling God but with an inevitable outcome in view once the conditions of the struggle are known.⁵ Far

¹Ibid., p. 60-62, 67.

²Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 85.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 392. cf. Preface, p. lx, lxii.

⁴Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of John Angell James, p. 25.

⁵Denney, Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 186-187.

from the sinlessness of Jesus preventing Him from knowing all that the consequences of sin were it actually enabled Him to realize their awful character as no sinful soul ever could.¹ This is how Denney understands propitiation, not as something which is offered to God but offered by God in bearing the evil of sin,

Forgiveness, or justification .. has come to men in Christ, whom God has set forth in His blood as a propitiation; it has come to One who has realised to the uttermost in His own person all that sin meant ...²

This is the same as saying that Christ took the responsibilities of the human soul to Himself,³ and that the bitter realization of all that sin means for man became His.⁴ In the following quotation the suggestion that in Atonement Christ as God in the flesh bears and neutralizes the divine wrath leads to the conception of transmuting the power of evil for good,

When God for man's salvation reveals a divine righteousness which somehow confronts and neutralizes a divine wrath, we can only conceive it as God taking part with us against Himself ... it is not easy to escape at least the appearance of contradiction; perhaps it is not possible. But we must be true to the facts.⁵

It will be recalled that when writing to Dr. Simpson, Denney had said that in Christ God "took the responsibility of evil upon Himself and

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 104; The Death Of Christ, p. 214-219; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 163-164.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 159.

³Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 155. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 97-99.

⁴Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 84.

⁵Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 142.

somehow subsumed evil under good". Here we touch the essence of the Atonement which is the revelation of divine mercy and grace in the power of a perfect life both in life and in death to absorb the full force of evil's power, remain uncorrupted, and transform the energy of evil for maximizing good in the universe. In this the doctrine of the Atonement is put on a sound moral basis of righteousness and freedom which are God's aims in the creation of the world and men into a living community whose object is to increase good.

Are we able to trace suggestions of the same doctrine in Forsyth's writings? Christ consented voluntarily, he says, to enter into the region of sin's penalty and curse, into the area of pain and horror which follow it;¹ he tasted the death of the universal soul -- death eternal which was the horror of his holiness. Forsyth devotes considerable attention to the meanness of sin which, he believes, is what Christ suffered to the full in that evil of evils -- the death of the Cross,

As it was universal, He was involved in it -- involved though not diseased, not captured. His life as man was a real life, and He was bound to feel the last reality of man's deadness. And He alone could feel it. They were too dead in sin. Alone He fulfilled the condition of feeling a moral death utterly universal, and therefore dreary, cold, loathsome, to such a soul as His.²

God has made the first, the greatest sacrifice, to which all of man's sacrifices are but response;³ the grace of God means the self-donation of God to guilty man, "and what He gives us first in this donation is not

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 147. cf. The Justification Of God, p. 183.

²Forsyth, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 30. cf. p. 22-23, 32.

³Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 94; Rome, Reform And Reaction, p. 218.

ourselves, or our souls, or our progress, destiny, and perfection, but Himself, His holy self."¹ It is in giving Himself, therefore, that God in Christ deals with the evil of the world which was, as we have shown for Forsyth, created by One who had in Himself all the resources with which to deal with creaturely abuse of freedom.

4. In our discussion thus far we have shown that by saying that the Atonement is an act of God three things are involved: (1) God assumes the responsibility for creating the conditions in which evil and sin arise; (2) God vindicates righteousness and judges sin by Himself bearing its penalty; and (3) God absorbs the consequences of evil in such a way as to preserve His goodness and transform the power of evil for good. In proposition (4) we shall concern ourselves with the fact and manner of the divine forgiveness which flows from this action, i.e., we will show that vicariousness is transitive in its power to forgive, convert, and heal. In his discussion of this relation Dr. Hodgson says that while punishment obtains only between a community and its members, forgiveness is possible between individuals existing side by side as fellow members of a society. Forgiveness, he says, is the only way in which the power of sin can be nullified by its being absorbed and its power employed to increase the output of love. This action is a complex situation involving three important elements: first, goodness must be upheld by the punishment of sin; second, sin's power to work evil must be absorbed; and third, the sinner must be won back in such a way as not to inhibit but to set forward his growth in

¹Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 372. cf. p. 259; and, The Justification Of God, p. 150.

freedom. God has absorbed the evil so that our sins have been "transformed by Christ as material to feed His righteous love" and He has thus earned the right to forgive.¹

In striking ways Dale, Denney, and Forsyth declare that there is implicit in vicariousness, in the absorption of evil or suffering for sin, a power which is able both to forgive and to heal. A denial of this objective element of the Atonement in the power of Christ to bear in Himself the world's evil is, wrote Dale, to deny, even though involuntarily, the crown and perfection of Christ's human love which is "self-sacrifice on behalf of those whom love desires to bless."² "It was greater", he says, "to endure suffering than to inflict it."³ Dale takes it as a self-evident proposition of the moral life that he who suffers the wrong, who bears it by absorbing its power, has the right in his love to grant forgiveness,

But when the heart is shaken by fears of future judgment and "the wrath to come", a vivid apprehension of the Death of Christ, as the voluntary death of the Moral Ruler and Judge of the human race, will at once inspire perfect peace. Without further explanation, the conscience will grasp the assurance that since He has suffered to whom it belonged to inflict suffering, it must be possible for Him to grant Remission of sins.⁴

When we realise what Christ is doing (in bearing our sins) then the possibility, the reality, and the nature of the reconciliation which

¹ Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 79. cf. p. 60 ff.

² Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 25.

³ Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 83.

⁴ Dale, The Atonement, p. 394.

Christ accomplished when He appeared in act as the minister and mediator of reconciliation will be clear to us, declared Denney.¹ The redeeming love of God in its ability to bear sin and forgive it is the beginning and ending of the Christian revelation. We are sure of this from our own experience of love's power to take the burden of another to itself for the good of the other,

The love which can literally go out of itself and make the burden of others its own is the radical principle of all genuine and victorious morality in the world. And to say that love cannot do any such thing, that the whole formula of morality is, every man shall bear his own burden, is to deny the plainest facts of the moral life.²

It is a simple fact of experience that sin is forgiven as it is borne and this is the ultimate truth of forgiveness, he says, though nonetheless the mystery remains.³ In the following poignant sentences Denney expounds how the vicarious bearing of sin has the power in certain circumstances to redeem the sinful,

When they are accepted, without repining or complaint -- when they are borne, as they sometimes are borne, freely and lovingly by the innocent, because to the innocent the guilty are dear -- then something is appealed to in the guilty which is deeper than guilt ... The suffering of such love (they are dimly aware), or rather the power of such love persisting through all the suffering brought on it by sin, opens the gate of righteousness to the sinful in spite of all that has been; sin is outweighed by it, it is annulled, exhausted, transcended in it. The great Atonement of Christ is somehow in line with this, and we do not need to shrink from the analogy.⁴

Forsyth wrote that our desperate need of forgiveness and God's passion to forgive meet in the Cross where the love of God, through

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 13.

²Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 103.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 162.

⁴Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 104-105.

holiness in the passion of Christ achieves forgiveness,

Fatherhood in the Old Testament neither demands sacrifice nor makes it, but in the New Testament the holy Father does both. The holiness is the root of love, fatherhood, sacrifice, redemption.¹

We have recoiled, he says from the idea of a love slack and oversweet and risen to a spiritual, personal, and moral standard of Fatherhood which makes satisfaction to the divine Holiness in the Holy Son,

The Holy Father is the one who does and must atone ... He offers a sacrifice rent from His own heart. It is made to Him by no third party ('for who hath first given unto Him'), but by Himself in His Son, and it is made to no foreign power, but to His own holy nature and law. Fatherhood is not bought from holiness by any cross; it is holiness itself that pays. It is love that expiates. Do not say, "God is love. Why atone?" The New Testament says "God has atoned. What love!" The ruling passion of the Saviour's holy God is this passion to atone and to redeem.²

Forsyth says that forgiveness cost the Father something, and, in words similar to Denney's, declares that the primary issue of forgiveness is its cost so that we look for its source in the suffering it occasioned the Godhead,

Every remission imperils the sanctity of the law unless he who remits suffers something in the penalty foregone; and such atoning suffering is essential to the revelation of love which is to remain great, high and holy.³

Two criticisms, both of which have been directed frequently against Dale and one against Denney, have been reserved for examination

¹Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 7. cf. "The Problem Of Forgiveness In The Lord's Prayer", in, The Sermon On The Mount; Manchester: James Robinson, 1903, p. 206; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 295, 332, 333.

²Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 9-10.

³Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 88. cf. The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 29-31.

here because they bear primarily upon the preceding propositions. The first is an illustration devised by Dr. Moberly¹ in criticism of Dale which is quoted with approval by Dr. Grensted.² "May I," asks Dr. Moberly, "if my child is shamefully wicked, 'forgive' him, provided that, as an adequate expression of 'hostility', I cut off my own finger first?" Apart from the fact, as we shall show in Chapter II, that Christ is not related to the race in the same way that the father is to the child, nor to the law in the sense that the word 'hostility' implies, it is clear that Dr. Moberly's example fails because it is not congruous with Dale's doctrine at the vital point. What Dale said was that the sufferings of Christ were relevant to the race's predicament because of the moral connection between them and the violated law of God according to which sin must be punished and the law vindicated; and, second, as has been made clear, Christ's sufferings are relevant to the race because it is the race's sorrow and all the evil consequences of sin that He bears not an arbitrary, self-inflicted wound such as the illustration describes.

The second criticism charges that Dale in particular, but also Denney, reintroduce the Grotian theory of the Atonement in a new guise. Dr. Stevens acknowledges that Dale claims to reject the Grotian theory but maintains that Dale's view is akin more to Grotius' ideas than to those of the Reformers, on the ground that Dale argues for the necessity of punishment but then makes an arbitrary substitution in asserting the principle in "some other way";³ and both Dr. Franks and Dr. Grensted⁴ make the same criticism. Canon Mozley also believes

¹R. C. Moberly, Op. Cit., p. 393.

²L. W. Grensted, Op. Cit., p. 318.

³G. B. Stevens, Op. Cit., p. 190, 328-329.

⁴L. W. Grensted, Op. Cit., p. 316-317; R. S. Franks, A History Of The Doctrine Of The Work Of Christ In Its Ecclesiastical Development; London: Hodder and Stoughton, (n.d.), Vol. II, p. 420.

that there is much in Dale's theory recalling Grotius and what Canon Mozley calls the theory of acceptilatio, namely, that Christ's sufferings were not the actual penalties of sin, but were accepted by God in place of, or as of equal value to, those penalties;¹ and, while he feels that there is less of a Grotian outlook in Denney than in Dale, the former, he thinks, has not avoided it altogether. Dr. Cave declares that Dale is inconsistent in advancing both the retributive view of punishment and the Grotian theory, adding, "The book which was intended to conserve the Penal theory showed that it could only be defended by its abandonment."² But these criticisms fail on three counts: first, they do not recognize that these three writers are operating within a doctrine of revelation which has to do with the disclosure of the divine purpose in divine acts; second, they imply what Dale, Denney, and Forsyth all deny, namely, that there is in these theories a transaction between God, Christ, and the law thus failing to see that God in Christ is both judge and victim; and, third, they have not recognized that what Christ does is not to bear an arbitrary, judicial sentence, but the actual consequences of sin and the destructive powers of evil in Himself, nullifying their power and triumphing over them. The Atonement takes place not in the atmosphere of law courts, or mathematical equivalents; but of ethical acts which bear the evil, vindicate righteousness, and redeem the sinner through their sin-bearing love.

¹ J. K. Mozley, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 179.

² Sydney Cave, Op. Cit., p. 225, 227.

5. Finally, it remains to show that these preceding four propositions may be epitomized in a key idea which is definitive of the objective element of the Atonement as an act by or within God, and this key idea is that the Atonement is the divine theodicy. It takes up within itself the justification of God in His purpose to create free beings who will share His fellowship and activity by overcoming the evil which arises as a possibility in a world where free, self-conscious beings are being created, and by redeeming them to Himself in a manner which both satisfies His own righteousness and preserves their freedom. Final perfection on earth, says Dr. Hodgson, is arguable from God's purpose in Creation and Redemption.¹

There is not a conscious effort on Dale's part to enunciate this formal aspect of his doctrine though, as we shall see, the material elements of it are present in abundance when we come to examine the way in which the Atonement is relevant to the world and the needs of men. The primary thrust of his argument is that through the Cross the moral constitution of the world has been changed and that because of its action in the moral sphere God will deliver the world from the bondage of evil and mankind from the condemnation and power of sin thus vindicating His own purposes.² Our discussion of Denney's position has made it clear that he too had come to this conclusion. But it was Forsyth who expressed this idea of the Atonement comprising the

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 117, 131 ff.

²Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 26-27. cf. Christian Doctrine, p. 261.

divine theodicy most forcefully. Apart from such terms as the self-donation of God, God acting in Christ, and that punisher and punished are one, we note three terms: the self-reconciliation, self-satisfaction, and self-justification of God. The self-reconciliation of God has special reference to salvation being racial as opposed to the traditional individualism of Protestant theology. The objective Atonement means that God has made it and given it finished to man affecting thereby the whole race in its standing before God. Thus, God is vindicated in His purpose of creating a race of free beings who voluntarily choose righteousness.¹ The divine self-satisfaction means that the world has been reconciled again to God by means of a sacrifice and satisfaction made by God Himself in the constitution of man; and, this achievement is what Forsyth calls repose in eternal fullness, or holiness,

The essence of holiness is God's perfect satisfaction, His perfect repose in eternal fullness. And the Christian plea is that this is Self-satisfaction, in the sublimest sense of the phrase.²

And the last term, the divine self-justification, means that in the Cross both God's purpose and man are justified, the former exhibited as rational and beneficent and the latter redeemed from his sin. Early in his career Forsyth could say, "God was in man expiating sin to His own holiness;"³ and, that any man would make such a satisfaction when he came to his senses even if God did not insist on providing it.⁴

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 92-94.

²Ibid., p. 204. cf. The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 86.

³Forsyth, "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 141.

⁴Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 318.

There is but one theodicy and that is the Gospel, he says, because in it we learn, rather unwillingly, that only God's justification of man yields the secret of man's justification of God. The Gospel has the only universal ethic in which the final moral relation of God to the world is transparent to the mind and satisfying to the heart,

A holy God self-atoned in Christ is the moral centre of the sinful world. Our justification by God has its key in God's justification of Himself.¹

¹ Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 94. cf. p. 40, 109, 124, 174.

Chapter II

THE RELEVANCE OF THE ATONEMENT TO THE WORLD AND THE RACEOutline

The importance of this aspect of the doctrine generally and in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. Criticisms of their views examined. The terminology they employ. Five important preliminary points discussed: (1) They aim to deal with both the objective and subjective elements, p. 89. (2) The problem attached to the terms objective and subjective, p. 94. (3) The fact:theory distinction, p. 95. (4) An objective act by God atoning for sin is full of moral appeal and influence, p. 97. (5) The relation of Christ to the race (p. 98-117): (a) Our lives can realise their true end only in fellowship with God, p. 103; (b) Human life develops not in independence but interdependence, p. 103; (c) Christ is the root, foundation, or life of the race, p. 103; (d) Our relations to the Father are determined by Christ's, p. 109; and, (e) The doctrine of the Trinity provides the key to the problem, p. 111. A review of the critics. The relevance of the Atonement to the world and the race developed in eleven propositions:

- I God in Christ performs an eternal act of sin-bearing love. This is not only a spectacle of love, but an act of sin-bearing love.
 - (a) The Cross shows that love can and does bear sin and forgive it.
 - (b) The Cross emerges from, it does not procure, love.
 - (c) The Cross declares that the cost which is attached to forgiveness has been borne by God.
 These principles illustrated in the use of certain terms. The power of forgiveness has been released into the world through the Cross, p. 118.
- II This means that in Christ, a living, perfect Person, the power of evil has been shattered, frustrated, absorbed, or nullified. Evil finds nothing in Him. The Moral powers of His life yield only and always good for the world and the race. Evil has been transmuted for good. The good has been established, won, vindicated, p. 137.
- III Thus a moral victory has been won in the world. This means that the relations between God and the world have been changed; the moral foundations of the world have been revolutionized. The Atonement achieves a world-interest of redemption, p. 145.
- IV In Christ the human ideal is set up in actuality. He both honours righteousness in life and submits to it in death through free obedience. Here God is vindicated in His aim of creating free persons who in fellowship with each other and Himself pursue and maximize the good of their own free wills, p. 159.

- V. In His free act of obedience Christ made an actual submission to the divine sovereignty and judgment in holiness. He made universal submission under solidary judgment. This is the fruit of the divine love which bears sin and forgives it, p. 166.
- VI. In His death Christ's relation to the Father expresses the truth of our relation because of our sin; otherwise, our relation to God in Him would be an incredible fiction. The Death Of Christ was both inevitable and indispensable; but its necessity follows not a priori but from the facts of our situation. Death is more than an event; for mankind it is an experience carrying with it penal overtones. Christ died our death, p. 175.
- VII. The totality of Christ's life and redeeming act is legitimately available to us as the ideal and energy of our own response through the interpenetration of His life with ours. In the power of His perfect acceptance of, and submission to, the will of God we accept and submit. The principle of interdependence was designed by God to prepare us for Christ. Three ways in which Christ's response bears upon ours: the perfection and power of His life is ours; He has made solidary reparation to the holy law of God; in the power of His actual submission we submit to the will of God. Discussion of terms, p. 186.
- VIII. The objective Atonement accomplished by Christ involves the form or possibility of our response. Human response is necessary to the fulfillment of the divine idea in Atonement. God provides a work that is consistent with righteousness and commensurate with what man is and ought to be. He aims to vindicate freedom. This work is able to create or to evoke the response for which it was intended, p. 201.
- IX. The work of Christ is the guarantee of righteousness in us. Perseverance; faith and works; sanctification. The Atonement marks not only the nullification of the power of evil generally but the death of sin in us in particular. We are called to share God's work of destroying evil, p. 207.
- X. Christ's continuing, eternal mediation is the guarantee of our righteousness and of the final realization of our ideal possibilities. This life can be achieved only within the redeemed community, the Church. The Church is the prophecy of, and the divine instrument for, the achievement of a world-interest of redemption, p. 214.
- XI. Not only has Christ achieved a moral victory in the world and redeemed us from sin, but in His person there is set up the centre or storehouse of values which act on us persuasively to choose the highest pattern of life and to share in God's work of maximizing values. Certain ideas from the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead help in setting this forward and bear a marked resemblance to what Forsyth said as shown in the Appendix, p. 226.

In our approach to the doctrine of the Atonement in the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, we have said that the thrust of their thinking may be best exhibited in and through the exposition of a paradox, namely, that in Atonement it is both true to say that God Himself bears the responsibility for the conditions in which evil and sin could arise and for their consequences in the moral order, and to say that in Atonement God gives or sacrifices His Son for the redemption of the world from its evil and sin. It is our task now to explore the meaning of the second part of this paradox to discover what the relevance is of the divine act to the world and the race. This is important not only so that we may enlarge the scope of the preceding discussion to assess the broader implications of the Atonement for the world order in accordance with the divine aim for its redemption; but also so that we may discover the ways in which it appears to us that the Atonement is relevant to the human race in the light of the culpability for sin which is the human predicament. It may be argued that however much in the long view of things God is willing to take the responsibility for creating the conditions in which evil and sin could arise we, as self-conscious moral beings, see sin to be our own doing, and its guilt our own responsibility. And, if the Atonement is to be meaningful for the race which is condemned by its sin, then its relevance must be established unambiguously. This will follow from asking the question, "To what purpose did God do this?" and the answer will be required to bear both on the broader issue of evil in the universe and the narrower issue of human sin.

The content of this chapter may be divided into two general parts. In the second part our discussion of the relation of Christ's work to the world and the race will be developed in eleven propositions. But before

this, the first part must deal with certain preliminary matters. It will be shown that Dale, Denney, and Forsyth aimed to deal adequately with this aspect of the Atonement and that while their critics have directed some of their most serious charges against them here, these criticisms generally fail because they do not take account of the way in which Christ is related to the race in these theories, which comprises the foundation for the construction of a doctrine.

That Dale, Denney, and Forsyth have been criticized most directly and strongly for apparently emptying the element of human response of real meaning or for minimizing it out of all proportion to its real importance both to God and man; and, also, for employing terminology descriptive of the way Christ is said to bear our sins which, it is claimed, immediately puts their views outside the pale both of morality and reason, is a fact so well known as to require little documentation here. But an account will be made of certain of these criticisms to show what points are made and that in most cases they miss their mark.

Dr. Moberly judges fairly that Dale 'doth protest too much' so that while he is combating theories which are merely subjective, the violence of his attack leaves the impression with his readers that he objects to the moral theory whatever form that theory may assume; and, also, that Dale advances the view that Christ being made sin for us suffered in our stead the actual punishment of sin as inflicted on Him by another. He says,

punishment remains as retaliatory infliction from without by another, and forgiveness as simply remission, or non-infliction, of penalties; and I doubt the possibility of any rational explanation of atonement while this meaning for the two words is assumed.¹

¹R. C. Moberly, Op. Cit., p. 390-393.

Dr. Franks feels that Dale does not account adequately for the relation of the Son to the Father in Atonement, or of the race to Christ, other than that the punishment He bears is a juridical equivalent of what man ought to have borne inflicted by God on an innocent victim.¹ Dr. Rashdall argues that if Atonement signifies that suffering is the just desert of sin, then, if this means that one man's suffering is the just desert of another's sin it is immoral; or, if it means that the sinner's suffering is the just desert of the sinner's sin then such is not fulfilled by a substitutionary sacrifice or punishment. That Dr. Rashdall's own predilections lead him to formulate the preceding which does not fit Dale's view will be made clear as we proceed. There is, in Dale's theory he says, an oscillation between two views: first, the unintelligible and immoral older view of substitution and the metaphysical identification of the sinner to Christ; and second, such statements on the subjective effects of Christ's death upon the sinner which are irrelevant to the former argument and do not tend to establish an objective atonement. Finally, the language Dale employs of the relation of Christ to the race is said to be either ambiguous, vague rhetoric, or equivocal.² About Denney, Dr. Rashdall says that he reads too much into the words of Scripture of both the importance and meaning of sacrifice and that he involves the Christian faith in heathen notions of propitiating or placating the wrath of deity before forgiveness can be granted. Further, Dr. Rashdall cannot see in the death of Christ the moral and penal elements he says Denney finds there, and, on the other hand, Denney tends, he says, to minimize the life of Christ, especially His obedience.³

¹R. S. Franks, Op. Cit., p. 420-423.

²Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 422-425, 493-496.

³Ibid., p. 43, 93, 187, 439-442.

Dr. Grensted declares that Dale's language is more mystical than substitutionary and that Dale departs from the penal theory while still employing the language of vicarious punishment. Denney, adds Dr. Grensted, employs the language of penal substitution without reserve thereby subordinating moral considerations and making justification and sanctification wholly distinct. He feels that in his later books Denney's emphasis on the love of God means that he has abandoned, in effect, the penal theory because of his increased consciousness of the difficulties it harbours on the manward side.¹ Dr. Mackintosh says that Dale's idea of the forgiveness of sins being directly related to the death of Christ is an incomplete idea as to mode; and, he gives no evidence of attempting to explain how forgiveness follows from Atonement in Denney's theory.² Canon Mozley appears to agree with both Dr. Moberly and Dr. Stevens that Dale's formulation of the relationship Christ has to the race is inconsistent with the first part of the theory. Also, he feels that in Denney's theory Christ's distinction from men rather than His likeness to them is in the foreground; though, while he disagrees with Dr. Stevens who, it will be remembered, contrasted the earlier and later writings of Denney, he nevertheless does not offer any constructive account of the rationale of forgiveness in Denney's view. The indebtedness of Canon Mozley to Forsyth is well known and he makes this clear in his appreciation; but, he does not offer an analysis of the relation of Christ's work to the world at large, except to mention it, and his discussion of the relation of Christ's work to the race does not go beyond identifying a moral and

¹L. W. Grensted, Op. Cit., p. 313-320, 322-325.

²Robert Mackintosh, Op. Cit., p. 191, 283-296.

spiritual connection between Christ and the race and declaring that there is posited in Forsyth's theory a moral effect on the race.¹

Dr. Cave does not explore the character of the relation of the believer to Christ in Dale's theory in virtue of which forgiveness is granted beyond stating that there is a union.² Dr. Hughes acknowledges that Dale posits a special relationship of Christ to the race but argues that regardless of this it is impossible to transfer, as he attributes to Dale, punishment from the sinner to Christ. Similarly, he does not believe that Denney has solved the problem of how Christ though sinless is related to the sinful race in Atonement, and the same criticism follows in the case of Forsyth; though unfortunately Dr. Hughes fails to develop his criticisms beyond the mere statement of them.³ Mr. Escott's belief that Forsyth's view operates outside personality implies that he has missed Forsyth's discussions on the relation of Christ to the race;⁴ and, in his brief study of Forsyth, Mr. Griffith also fails to engage Forsyth at this critical point.⁵

It does not appear to be an easy matter in the face of the terminology employed by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth to substantiate their claim that they genuinely go beyond the categories of vicarious punishment, just as we have seen already that the apparent thrust of their thought and language on the Godward aspect of the Atonement seemed to identify their theories with the older juridical forms and ideas. Dale speaks of the submission of

¹J. K. Mozley, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 178, 180-181, 182 ff. cf. The Heart Of The Gospel, p. 81-84.

²Sydney Cave, Op. Cit., p. 225.

³T. H. Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 80, 82, 91, 45. Note also J. M. Shaw, Christian Doctrine; London: Lutterworth Press, 1953, p. 245, on Denney.

⁴Harry Escott, Op. Cit., p. 28.

⁵G. O. Griffith, Op. Cit., p. 36-59.

Christ to the justice of the divine resentment against sin for the race;¹ that He endured the penalties of sin and so made an actual submission to the law which stands behind them;² and that He submitted to and accepted God's condemnation of our sin.³ We can conceive of His death only by its relation to the penal consequences of our sin, he wrote, and this is what Christ's being made sin for us means, that in a "very real and deep sense He made the consequences of sin His own."⁴ Though, surprisingly, the actual number of references to such sufferings is not nearly so great as generally supposed; rather, they are greatly outnumbered and outweighed by the extent of the discussion on the relation of Christ to the race.

In addition to the frequent use of such terms as ransom, substitute, representative, and satisfaction to describe the relation of Christ to the race, Denney orientates his theory around certain key ideas which have been the traditional motif of Protestant theology. These may be grouped under three headings: First, Christ died our death in the sense, clearly, of dying for our sins, or for us all, and in that death of His all died.⁵ Second, Christ made perfect submission to God for us when the doom of sin fell upon Him.⁶ And third, in His covenant blood, or sacrifice, Christ is our life with God.⁷ Forsyth's language appears even more forced than that employed by Dale and Denney. Apart from extensive use of such terms as

¹Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 75.

²Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 161.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 422-423.

⁴Dale, Preface, p. lxiii. cf. lx.

⁵Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 100, 149, 186-187, 189-190, 232-233; Studies In Theology, p. 110; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 196; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 194-195.

⁶Denney, The Epistle To The Romans, p. 613; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 259-260.

⁷Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 90-91.

redemption, reconciliation, sacrifice, blood, satisfaction, expiation, propitiation, substitute, and representative, his ideas are often put into such expressions as the following: Christ confesses holiness in bearing our curse for sin;¹ Christ was made sin for us;² and, Christ died our death bearing the evil of the world upon Himself.³

Is it possible in the light of such terminology as we have outlined to develop a doctrine of the relevance of Christ's work to the world and the race which will be both rational and moral, which will on the one hand meet the requirements of, and deal with, the disorders caused by sin in the community of life in which God and man share, but, on the other, which operates within the sphere of moral and teleological categories, not the sphere which the preceding terms and images seem to imply? In other words, what can we say that is drawn from the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth which will qualify the apparent position they take and which will lead us both into and beyond their own theories to insights which are not only satisfying intellectually and morally, but also equal to the problems of an advancing civilization and to the developing insights of the Church? As we approach this, there are five important points of a character preliminary to the main argument which must claim our attention first as setting the stage for what is to follow.

¹Forsyth, Religion In Recent Art, p. 208; The Work Of Christ, p. 83, 126, 128, 133.

²Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 166; Faith And Criticism, p. 141; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 312, 364; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 36, 101.

³Forsyth, Religion In Recent Art, p. 209-210; The Work Of Christ, p. 189; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 168; The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 18, 27-28, 42, 44; Missions In State And Church, p. 10.

1. It appears that the attempts of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth to provide in their discussions an equal emphasis on both the so-called objective and subjective elements of the Atonement has been either missed completely by their critics, minimized, or misunderstood. In the case of Dale this is clear in at least two respects. On the one hand the structure of his argument is that the work of Christ must be related in two ways, namely, to the law of God and to the race, and he devotes a chapter to each of these.¹ He claims explicitly that only to show what the objective element of the Atonement is means that a completed doctrine has not been developed and that the subjective or relation-to-the-world-and-men element is vital. When introducing the argument of these two chapters (each of which is roughly of the same length as the other) Dale said that in investigating the connection between the mysterious death of Christ and the remission of sins he proposed to enquire into two questions, i.e., whether this connection could be explained by an original relation between Christ and the eternal law of righteousness of which sin is the transgression, and, whether this connection can be explained by any original relation existing between Christ and the race whose sins needed remission.² And, when introducing the second of these inquiries he said,

If it can be shown that the original and ideal relation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the human race constitutes a reason why He should become a Sacrifice and Propitiation for our sins, the conception of His death illustrated in the preceding Lecture will rest on more solid and secure foundations.³

¹Chapters IX and X in The Atonement, and three chapters in Christian Doctrine (X, XI, XII) are devoted to both ideas.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 361.

³Ibid., p. 402.

It is a remarkable fact that most of Dale's critics devote little or no attention to his development of this idea, with the exception chiefly of Dr. Rashdall, as we have noted. This appears to be a singular case in point of how the reading of the first half of a theory has prejudiced a serious study of the whole.

But beyond this, Dale strives to make clear that his aim is to do justice to both the objective and subjective elements. In 1864 in the sermon The Living God The Saviour Of All Men he had urged that in the Atonement God had anticipated both the necessity for changed moral relations between the world and Himself and the necessity of winning back the affection of the human heart.¹ But it was chiefly after the publication of The Atonement in 1875 that he was attacked most directly for emptying the subjective element of meaning, so much so in fact, that in the Preface he took pains to clarify his position. What he was attacking, he said, was the doctrine that the Atonement is simply a spectacle to evoke response, and he argues convincingly that even in Bushnell's treatise the subjective element rests on an objective foundation. For if, he says, Bushnell conceives of Christ as our sacrifice, our offering to God for sin, and that therefore our thought is enabled to move upward to God, then "the subjective power of the Death of Christ will be the greatest when its objective value is most vividly present to the heart."² In the following quotation his

¹Op. Cit., p. 25-26.

²Preface, p. xlvii-liv.

view that both the objective and subjective are constituent elements of the doctrine and that the latter rests on the former is made clear,

The two conceptions -- one of which I say we must accept, one of which we must reject -- are these: (1) That the Death of Christ has a direct relation to the remission of sins. (2) That it was simply a great appeal of the Divine love to the human race; this, and nothing more. That it was this -- because it was much beside this -- is the truth which the whole volume was written to illustrate. The Lectures were intended to show that God has manifested His infinite love to the human race, has made a supreme appeal to the conscience and heart of mankind, by atoning for human sin.¹

But, even though here and earlier,² Dale had employed the term "simply" in his criticism of the interpretation of the Cross as an appeal by those who held the moral influence theory, its relative obscurity in his impassioned argument against what he considered to be the excesses of the theory, and the impression he left with many readers of placing the two viewpoints into mutually exclusive camps, left him open for misunderstanding and criticism.

This approach of discussing the Atonement from the Godward and manward sides is present in a marked fashion in the theory of Denney also, though not as consciously in the two-fold division of presentation of Dale, in Denney's early writings. However, with the publication of The Atonement And The Modern Mind and the posthumous publication of the Cunningham Lectures The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation (which Denney was unable to give personally due to his last illness) a full-orbed awareness of the problem emerges; though this awareness cannot be escaped if one reads his earlier works at all sympathetically. In The Death Of Christ he had written,

¹Preface, p. xlvi.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 10-11.

There can be no gospel unless there is such a thing as a righteousness of God for the ungodly. But just as little can there be any gospel unless the integrity of God's character be maintained.¹

A poignant way in which Denney frequently combines these two ideas is to declare that the Atonement is truly set forward only by combining its two essential relations, namely, the love for man in the divine purpose in which it originated and the sin of man with which it actually deals.²

But the formalization of this idea is not lacking in Denney's writings. God, he says, appeals to men by acting in a way that is consistent with His own nature, i.e., the moral order of which God and man form a part and within which the acts of God are morally intelligible to man,

It is not by calculating what will win us but by acting in consistency with Himself, that God irresistibly appeals to men.³

For the apostle Paul, he declares, faith is the whole of religion on the inner side as propitiation is the whole of it on the outer side; therefore, propitiation and faith, external and internal, objective and subjective, satisfaction and reconciliation, are not mutually exclusive categories but indispensable aspects of a whole. But, it must be remembered that the relevance of the Cross to the world and men is grounded in an objective work having been accomplished by Christ,

The work of reconciliation in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished ... before the gospel is preached.⁴

The Atonement, Denney wrote, is external which means that Christ is seen to be the revelation of God and His cross the act of God for the salvation of the world; and internal as this aspect views the sinner abandoning himself to Christ and living in Him.⁵

¹Op. Cit., p. 165.

²Ibid., p. 123-129, 140, 212-215, 284.

³Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 92. cf. p. 15.

⁴Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 144-146. cf. The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 237.

⁵Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 28.

Forsyth, too, declares that while formally we distinguish the objective from the subjective aspect of the work of Christ they are but essential elements of the whole, for both are true and both are necessary; but, what Christ does for us is the ground of any work He does in us.¹ Our forgiveness, he says, has its objective ground in the death of Christ not in the authority of a subjective consciousness even though it is Christian; thus the Cross is the divine act of redemption before it is man's message of it.² Only when God had in fact provided an Atonement does the possibility of our response arise, he says, for the Atonement is an act of His grace which is followed by an act of our faith,

If the death of Christ be preached only for the pathos of its effect on us and not for the ethos of its effect on God, we lack that prime hallowing of His name which exercises on us the profoundest moral effect of all, and which bases our ethic on holiness immutable and eternal.³

In atonement there are two personal movements, Forsyth declares, the manward movement of God and the Godward movement of man, but the latter is reciprocal as based on the former because the value of the Cross is primarily Godward before it is manward.⁴ Thus a change is effected on both sides, even if on the divine side the disposition existed before and led to the act that reconciles,

The great mass of Christ's work was like a stable iceberg. It was hidden. It was His dealing with God, not man. The great thing was done with God. It was independent of our knowledge of it ... Doing this for us was the first condition of doing anything with us.⁵

It is clear from the foregoing discussion of Forsyth's position that we dare not minimize either aspect of the Atonement; both the Godward

¹Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 50. cf. p. 64-65.

²Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 71; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 6.

³Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 318. cf. p. 178, 335-336; The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 327.

⁴Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 322-352.

⁵Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 64-65. cf. The Work Of Christ, p. 185; and, The Justification Of God, p. 37.

and manward relations must be taken into account fully. He was keenly aware that the manward side of the Atonement often received scant attention in post-Reformation Protestant theology and that the drift of emphasis in nineteenth century theology, especially in Britain, was attempting to redress the balance. It was false, he said, to postulate an antithesis between the bearing of Christ's work on God and on man; the solution lies in a frank recognition that both are true and necessary,

Can we combine the truth in each alternative? Can we reach the value of Christ's saving work (i.e. its true and final value) if we exclude its effect within man? Must we not take that in? Nihil in effectu quod non prius in causa. Must we not include the effect to get the full value of the cause, and give a full account of it?¹

2. We need also to bear in mind, as following from the preceding discussion, that Dale, Denney, and Forsyth did not avoid altogether the ambiguity which became attached to the terms objective and subjective. This is so not only because they were men of their age who must grapple with charge and countercharge in heated controversy when these terms were bandied about, but also because they were the heirs of a tradition which viewed the relevance of Christ's work to the world largely in human personal or experiential terms, thus the dominance of the term subjective in the neat pair objective:subjective. But we must avoid this pitfall. In fact, the term subjective may be quite misleading because what happens in man through redemption is but a constituent part (though vital nonetheless) of the whole redemptive act as that act is relevant generally to the world in the purpose of God. What happens in man as well as for him through the Cross is in some sense a part of the objective Atonement, but, the objective Atonement has as its primary referent the world. The Cross involves, as

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 186. cf. p. 175-188.

Forsyth puts it, a "world-interest" of redemption; because it embraces the world order and the race, the individual is included. Thus, it is true to say that the Atonement is an objective work, first, because God accomplishes it, and, second, because it deals not only with an objective bearing in it of the world's evil and man's sin but also with an objective bearing in it of human response; though at the same time it is correct to speak of a subjective element because man is called upon by God to make a genuine response of faith. Dr. Hodgson is careful to stress the cosmic reference of Christ's work. While it is true, he says, that the revelation and act of God in Christ for redemption was narrowed down to a point in history and mediated through a redeemed company, Christ does not limit His activity there. Rather, He aims by means of this redeeming act and through His continuing earthly body the Church to bring to perfection His redeemed creation.¹ Therefore, both the so-called objective and subjective elements are important, declares Dr. Hodgson; they are not contradictory, but complementary.² Because of the limited denotation and ambiguous character of the term subjective, for our discussion of the relevance of the Atonement (which will comprise the large part of the remainder of this chapter), it will be preferable to employ the terms 'world' and 'men', generally, as the referents of the work of Christ as we pursue the rationale of the relationship.

3. A correlative of the foregoing is the problem of the fact:theory distinction as applied to the Atonement which, in the case of these three writers, may appear to put them into conflict with one another because of

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 111-126.

²Ibid., p. 146. cf. For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 75.

certain professed differences of approach. In the early pages of his treatise Dale stressed that the Atonement is the anchor of faith only as the central fact of the Christian faith and not as a theoretical construction. It is, he said, the fact of Christ's death on the Cross which alone saves men from sin; it is enough that a man believe in Christ whether or not he has a theory as to how Christ saves him; faith in the fact is primary, theory about it will follow logically.¹ On the other hand both Denney and Forsyth deplore the tendency to make any final distinction between fact and theory. Denney declares that an uninterpreted fact is to us meaningless,

There is no such thing conceivable as a fact of which there is no theory, or even a fact of which we have no theory; such a thing could never enter our world at all; if there could be such a thing, it would be so far from having the virtue in it to redeem from sin, that it would have no interest for us and no effect upon us at all.²

Forsyth insisted that while the fact of the crucifixion does not depend on a theory, a fact like the Atonement can be separated from a theory of some kind only "by a suffusion of sentiment on the brain."³ Despite this apparent divergence of Denney and Forsyth from the position taken by Dale, they all, in fact, sustain the same position. What Dale regards as the fact of the Atonement is not the bare, historical fact of the death of Christ on the Cross, but the apostolically interpreted fact that the death of Christ is the objective ground on the basis of which there is forgiveness of sins. What the fact is, says Dale, is simply that there is an intimate and direct relation between the Cross of Christ and the sins of

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 3, 10, 112; Christian Doctrine, p. 230; The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 211.

²Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 106. cf. p. 47-48; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 314; The Death Of Christ, p. 4, 140-141.

³Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 70. cf. p. 61.

mankind in virtue of which the remission of sins is possible.¹ And this is what Denney and Forsyth declare to be the interpreted fact which stands at the foundation of the doctrine. The words "Christ died for our sins" signify for Denney the fact and declare the essence of the theory, "what they tell us, and tell us on the basis of incontrovertible experience, is that the forgiveness of sins is for the Christian mediated through the death of Christ."² In dealing with the Cross, wrote Forsyth, we are not dealing with a bare historical fact but with an apostolically interpreted historical fact -- an act of God -- which is full of theological significance as well as religious experience.³ We may compare the position taken by these theologians with that which Dr. Hodgson has advanced when he urges that we distinguish the doctrine of the Atonement as a gospel message from theories about it; though this latter is of crucial importance because it is an account of the way in which the Christian Church has striven to explain its meaning to the world at successive stages in the development of human civilization.⁴ Forsyth has reminded us that we ought to distinguish what he has designated primary and secondary theology; that is, the distinction between a fundamental statement of the revelation of God and an expansion of the central truth in a manner consistent with the growing experience and insight of the Church.⁵

4. What is implicit in all this as tying in the doctrine of the Atonement with the doctrine of revelation, and, which the critics of these men fail to see, is that the meaning of the Cross as redemptive for both

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 19, 20.

²Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 11. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 119.

³Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 61; The Work Of Christ, p. 43.

⁴Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 13, 149.

⁵Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 213.

the world and men centres in its interpretation as a moral act; it is something accomplished, done, or finished by God. But it is nonetheless a spectacle possessing within itself -- in virtue of its quality as a divine moral act -- a powerful moral appeal to the conscience of the race, and this latter is an essential element of the redeeming act as an exhibition of the divine love for the world. It is strange, therefore, to find Dr. Rashdall claiming that Dale cannot legitimately employ the moral influence of the Cross upon men if he holds an objective theory.¹ What Dale in fact says, and here we but reinforce what we have said already, is that apart from the Cross being a divine moral act for our redemption dealing with sin, its appeal as a revelation of the divine love to the human heart cannot be rightly felt.² And there are important references made by Dale to the moral influence of the Cross viewed as such a divine act.³ Also, when Forsyth declares that a real Atonement is "one not shown but done on the Cross, as the consummation of Christ's holy personality and its work" he has in mind this same pre-requisite of a moral act which as accomplishing something on behalf of the world and the race carries in itself an appeal to the human mind.⁴

5. The fifth and final preliminary point to be discussed is the relation Christ sustains to the world and men, and in this whole question we are thrown back upon the doctrine of revelation and of the Trinity. We

¹Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 425-426.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 114-116.

³Reference to this will be made at a later stage, but it may be noted here that examples are to be found in The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 213-214; Christ And The Controversies Of Christendom; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1869, p. 23 ff; and, The Atonement, p. 32.

⁴Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. v. cf. Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 178; and, Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 92; The Death Of Christ, p. 118, 144-145.

have noted that the primary mode of revelation advanced by these writers is through the divine activity which is interpreted as divine for the accomplishment of particular ends by minds which the Holy Spirit illuminates. There is in the course of revelational history therefore a progressive unfolding of the purpose of God to His people. Throughout the Old Testament period He gradually trained His people and disclosed to them His redemptive purposes winning them away from both formalistic ritualism and humanistic moralism, as Dr. Hodgson has put it,¹ to the idea that God was achieving a moral purpose in the world and race. This series of divine disclosures through the divine activity came to its climax in the life and work of Christ, for in His incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension, all the preceding acts of God are summed up. And, His continuing life and activity in the Church through the Spirit means that God continues to disclose His purpose and work His will through such a redeemed community.²

What is important for our purposes here about this last stage is that through the risen Christ and His Spirit we have come into a fuller and richer understanding of the nature of God. The doctrine of the Trinity has arisen from the experience and convictions of the Christian Church that only as God could Christ have redeemed them, and, only as God could the Holy Spirit indwell them, lead them, and empower them. Dr. Hodgson writes,

¹ Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 27, 30, 69-70.

² Ibid., p. 41. cf. For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 28, 70, 76-78.

The Christian Church did not come to the doctrine of the Trinity by importing metaphysical speculation into an originally simple faith. The historical sequence was the reverse of this. The doctrine came by Christians, in defiance of contemporary metaphysics, insisting on bearing witness to what they believed to be the empirical evidence of God acting on earth in Christ and in the Holy Spirit.¹

This experiential motif as comprising an essential element of the order of revelation and of the development of early Christian theology -- a process that is not final nor complete -- is the dominant trait of the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth which leads us into the nature of the relation Christ sustains to the race and thereby into the meaning of the Cross for the world and mankind. It is, said Dale, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity which answers for us finally the questions attendant upon the relation of Christ to the law of God and to the race; our eyes are too dim to comprehend, but "the divine Spirit enables us to see God in Christ and to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd."² The understanding which the Apostles gained of Christ and of the Holy Spirit followed Christ's Ascension and the descent of the Spirit when they gradually apprehended the true character of Christ's person and work.³ Denney writes that our conception of God has been, and continues to be, built up experientially; thus, the doctrine of the Trinity "is based on the historical fact of the revelation of God in Christ, and on the experience of the new divine life which the Church possesses through the Spirit."⁴ When discussing the unity

¹ Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 40.

² Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 162.

³ Dale, Preface, p. xxx ff.

⁴ Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 385. cf. Studies In Theology, p. 70-71, 159-161; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 58. Elsewhere he said, "if it be true that the dogma of Christianity is the Trinity, and that this is the central content of the creeds, it must be remembered that the trinitarian conception of God depends upon the revelation of the Father, and the gift of the Spirit, both of which are dependent on the knowledge of the Son ... show how instinctive is the combination of Father, Son, and Spirit in the thought of the New Testament writers, and how completely the problem is set in Christian experience to which the Church doctrine of the Trinity, as embodied in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, is an answer," 'Creed', Dictionary Of The Bible, (ed. James Hastings), I, p. 517. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 192, 317, 327.

of God Denney declared that the three persons of the Trinity together work in the achievement of redemption; the Spirit, he said, is "part of the one divine causality which -- as Father, Son, and Spirit -- confronts the sinful world, and works in unison for its redemption."¹ In comparison with the large bulk of the published writings of Forsyth, the amount of space devoted to the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to the Atonement is surprisingly small. However, the experiential basis for the development of the doctrine, especially of the doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit is referred to by him not infrequently. The key doctrines are validated in experience so that we need not fear attacks on such doctrines as the nature of Christ,

Indeed, God is in Christ in such a way that Christ's express statement of unity with the Father is of less moment for us than the total impression produced by His whole life and person. This experience teaches us that His presence is God's presence, His action on us God's action, His forgiveness of us God's forgiveness.²

An interesting sidelight of the foregoing is the fact -- which is made explicit by Dale and Forsyth, and is implicit in Denney's whole approach -- that the order of importance of the Christian doctrines varies with one's point of view. If we view them theologically, in terms of their depth, then the order is Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement; but if pragmatically, in terms of their importance for us, then the order is Atonement, Incarnation, Trinity.³

Already we have employed this method of showing what Christ was and ^{to} is the Church as this discloses to us just what God is doing in history when, in discussing the character of the objective element of the Atonement,

¹Denney, "Holy Spirit", Op. Cit., p. 744.

²Forsyth, "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 119. cf. p. 130, 134; and, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 18; Religion In Recent Art, p. 221; Rome, Reform, And Reaction, p. 79.

³Dale, The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 49-51. Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 128-129.

we showed that the ^{doctrine of the} original relation of Christ to the law of God in virtue of which He as God is the Moral Ruler of the universe arose from the conviction of the early Church and our own that Christ is so great a person that we must construct our universe around Him. Now we will employ the same approach to show that because of what Christ is to us in redemption and in His continuing activity in the Church, He is the root, the foundation, or the life of the race; and, that the essence of the relation of His work to us rests upon this role which He has filled from eternity as Creator, as Incarnate, and as Redeemer.

Here, again, while the constructed doctrine is clearly the teaching of Denney and Forsyth, it is Dale who provides the rationale of the approach to this role by means of a biblical analogy, just as he has done in establishing from the thought and experience of St. Paul the relation of Christ to the universe as its Moral Ruler. Who and what is Christ to Christians, asks Dale? This question can be poignantly answered in the parable of the vine and branches which illustrates for us the relation believing Christians have to their Redeemer. Dale offered two laws¹ which follow from this analogy and which govern the lives of Christians, and these will be discussed later (but as incorporated in a broader development of five principles drawn from the writings of all three men). These principles will provide the foundation of the discussion which will follow them aiming to elucidate the relevance of Christ's redeeming work to the world and men.

¹First, that the power and perfection of our moral and spiritual life is a perpetual revelation of the power and perfection of the life of Christ; and second, that our own relation to the Father is determined by the relation of Christ to the Father, The Atonement, p. 420.

(a) Our lives can be realized, they can achieve their potential, only in union with God who created them and desires that in free fellowship with Himself we share in His life and His purpose of creating a community of free persons aiming to serve righteousness. We are created for fellowship with God and we can find no rest until we are united with Him in Christ in free, conscious union, in which our personalities are not sublimated, but heightened.¹

(b) It is a fact that human life develops not in independence of other persons, but in interdependence, as we have shown already, in the biological, social, and moral matrixes of experience. Our lives are intertwined; we depend upon one another; our personalities develop in the context of societal relations. This is the divine intention for the race in the relation both of its individuals to each other and of the race to God.

(c) What the Incarnation means, therefore, is that God has entered this world of time and space in a genuine human existence and that in this life Christ is true God and true man. He sums up in Himself the divine ideal of the race; He exhibits human nature in its true form enjoying free fellowship with God in a life of perpetual holiness. Therefore, Christ is the root, the ideal, the foundation of the race; and, this has been His role as the eternal Word from eternity. Dale, Denney, and Forsyth develop this by showing that Christ is truly God and truly man; and as we have already discussed the former, it remains to set forward certain data respecting the latter.

¹Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 85-86; The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 20; Preface, p. xl-xliii; "Preliminary Essay", Op. Cit., p. xvii; Fellowship With Christ, p. 307, 353. Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 189; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 11. Forsyth, "The Problem Of Forgiveness In The Lord's Prayer", Op. Cit., p. 206; The Work Of Christ, p. 65; 74; Christian Perfection, p. 13.

Christ became incarnate, said Dale, to live a true human life in the community of interdependent individuals which comprise the human race.¹ In Christ God is made nigh; there is a real solidarity between Christ and the race. Christ has brought the race into the most intimate of relations with Himself in the Incarnation.² Denney declares that Christ identifies Himself with the race by becoming one with us in nature, sharing our experiences and interests,³ "Christ has identified Himself with man;"⁴ He could only redeem us, says Denney, by becoming one of us,

This was His aim in redeeming us by passing through all modes of human existence, seen and unseen. It made Him Lord of all. He filled all things. He claims all modes of existence as His own. Nothing separates us from Him.⁵

Denney expresses it in another form by saying that Christ makes common cause with us so that just as the title Son of God describes His unique relation to God so the title Son of Man describes the identification of Christ with us and our interests,

Apart from sharing our experience, that sharing of our nature, which is sometimes supposed to be what is meant by incarnation, is an abstraction and a figment. But everything in that sharing of our experience is essential.⁶

Forsyth warns us to regard the Incarnation not as prodigy but as a divine act the meaning of which is explained in the Atonement.⁷ For a world of men, he said, a man in whom the temporal and eternal coincide was the only fitting form of revelation. But in doing this we must employ

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 257-260; cf. p. 203, 208.

²Dale, Preface, p. xxx.

³Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 68-69, 166.

⁴Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 235.

⁵Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 197.

⁶Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 242. cf. Studies In Theology, p. 37-39; The Death Of Christ, p. 155.

⁷Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 93-94.

categories of the interpenetration of personality when thinking of Christ's relation to the race as this bears witness to the final relation which through redemption man will bear to God.¹ The compatibility of these ideas of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth with the views of Dr. Hodgson are so evident as to obviate the necessity of lengthy discussion, except to cite one reference from his recent Gifford lecture,

If, then to be a man is to be the subject of experiences mediated through a body in space and time, what will it mean to say that in Jesus of Nazareth God was made man? It will mean that He entered upon the experience of living as the subject of such experiences. This could only be if it was done at some particular time and place in the history of this world. Christian belief is that that is what was done in Palestine not quite two thousand years ago.²

And when we remember that it was God who was manifest in the flesh, then what we see is that humanity finds its ideal, its goal, its root or foundation in Christ. Christ sums up the idea of man and on this hinges the entire relation of Christ to the race in Atonement. All that we ought to be as a race and which actually becomes ours in Christ, says Dale, was involved in the original and ideal relation of humanity to Himself. This is made clear in the following,

According to the Divine idea of human nature, man was to live by perpetual fellowship with the life of the eternal Word, and in that life was to inherit all the knowledge, purity, and blessedness of which "light" is the beautiful symbol. As the life of the Eternal Word or Son of God was to be the life of the human race, His relation to the Father was also to be ours. Had we never sinned, our history would have been a perpetual ascent towards His supreme holiness, and even the earliest movements of our moral and spiritual life would have found their ideal expression in Him. His relation to the Father would, therefore, have been ours from the very first.³

¹Forsyth, Theology In Church And State, p. 157, 159, 184. cf. The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 83, 229; "Christ And The Christian Principle", Op. Cit., p. 156-157.

²Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 81.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 420.

Therefore, for Dale, the race does not stand in a relation to God before the entrance of sin into it different from its relation afterwards by an intervention of Christ conceived as contingent on the involvement of the race in sin; Christ is the ground of the race's relation to God irrespective of sin -- He is the original root of the race -- and when in redemption we are delivered from sin into the divine fellowship the power and perfection of our moral life reveals His own, and our relation to the Father is determined by His. We can only sustain a relation to the Father in Christ, the Eternal Word, Who is the life as well as the salvation of the race.

It will be recalled that Denney also had stressed this essential role of Christ; He is "both to God and to man what no other could be, and determined all their mutual relations."¹ The importance of this for both the Godward and manward aspects is clear from the following where, let it be noticed, the dependence of all men upon Christ for their life is affirmed,

There is no mere man in the world, in the sense of a man whose nature is entirely alien to God, out of relation to the divine; but the completeness with which God is present in Christ depends upon a unique incarnation; and the integrity of Christ's humanity is not affected by this, for the divine which is incarnate in Him is, at the same time, the principle of all self-consciousness, of all reason and goodness, in all men.²

There are two ways by means of which Denney gives this formal expression, namely, that Christ is the root or foundation of the race, and, that Christ

¹Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 408. cf. p. 398.

²Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 68-69.

is the idea of the race. On the former he says that "the whole seed of manhood is in man too from the beginning ... the Christ-life is really primary and fundamental."¹ And in the following -- which is a rare example of where any of these three theologians, though contemporaries and in sympathy with one another's views, alludes to one of the others -- Denney declares his support for the position taken by Dale,

Rather does the whole phenomenon justify us in putting such a question as Dale's: What must Christ's relation to men be in order to make it possible that He should die for them? -- a question leading to an essentially evangelical argument, that Christ must have had an original and central relation to the human race and to every member of it. Whether this is the best way to express the conclusion need not here be considered, but that this is the final way to approach the problem is not open to doubt.²

And, on the latter, he writes that Christ "was not one thing which we all are; . He was not a sinner ... it is the presupposition of redemption."³ Christ exhibits in His own person "what He guarantees we shall be";⁴ and, "it is our life that we see in Jesus, but we see it in its truth and as it ought to be, a life in God, wholly at one with Him."⁵ Thus it is through Christ that all souls, as Denney says, are related not casually but essentially to God.⁶

Forsyth's formulation of this idea proceeds along similar lines and may be summarized under two headings. First, Christ and the race interpenetrate. Christ is our moral owner and King, he says, and the root of all that makes our immortality other than burdensome.⁷ The essential

¹Denney, On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 38. cf. Studies In Theology, p. 78-79.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 318.

³Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 41. cf. p. 37.

⁴Ibid., p. 166.

⁵Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 9. cf. p. 249-250; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 16, 392.

⁶Denney, On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 42.

⁷Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 136.

relation of Christ to the race lay in the perfect moral character of Christ in virtue of which the ideal of the race is achieved by what Forsyth calls the involution of two personal movements,

For the essence of Humanity is conscience. It is man's moral relation to a holy God ... Christ's ... consists in the moral reality of his experience, his conflict, and his growth. It means his true ethical personality growing in an actual historical situation ... His manhood was in his perfectly active receptivity. His subordination was no inferiority ... His identity with man lay in no mere continuity of substance ... but in his assumption of man's conditions of personality, and his renunciation of God's.¹

This idea of mutual involution or interpenetration is ethical, personal, and teleological in character, and Forsyth employs it to describe both the growth and interpenetration of men in a society, and of the relations between God and the race in redemption. The second way of describing Christ's relation to the race is by saying that He is the universal Person. Around this cluster such ideas as that Christ is the ever-living Mediator on the universal scale; the bearing of Christ's work is upon the race in the first instance then upon the individual; Christ brings to the race public peace and concord in His Cross as the race's crisis and turning point; and, the universality of His person and work is our assurance and hope. For example,

The certainty of revelation and faith is that in the universal Christ the world is chosen for salvation, and is saved in principle, and shall be saved in fact.²

Forsyth declares that the exclusiveness of Christ is His universality and

¹Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 351-352. cf. p. 333-334, 343; The Work Of Christ, p. 158.

²Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 357. cf. "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 113; The Work Of Christ, p. 87.

that the essence of this is Christ's holiness. Therefore, what is important to note here is that the universal relation Christ sustains to the race is intensive in virtue of His moral excellence and not extensive.¹

(d) It is clear from the foregoing that this essential and original relation which Christ bears to the race and of which the Incarnation is the exhibition in a divine act, brings the race into direct relationship with the eternal law of God, or moral order; not only in judgment as we sense ourselves to be situated because of our sins or as yearning after an ideal which eludes us, but also as a real possibility of fulfillment within the context of human life. As a race we are brought into the most intimate of possible relations to the holiness of God through Christ. Significantly, for Dale, the Incarnation is not an event which occurred as contingent on the intrusion of sin into the race, but as an eternal idea becoming actual in the history of this world so that what the race was destined to be, and through redemption would yet be, was exhibited in history in a genuine human life. As the original root of the race Christ is the idea of true man and in Incarnation He is the realization of true man; in Him the race is brought to God. Thus, Dale adds, "even if we had not sinned, I suppose that He would have come to us, in order that we might come to Him."²

¹Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 204-206; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 312; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 69-75; The Work Of Christ, p. 184.

²Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 353. cf. Preface, p. xxx; The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 45-47. Note, however, that Dale, Denney, and Forsyth resist any tendency to set the Incarnation above the Atonement in importance. Dale insists that the keynote of the Christian gospel is 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and not John 1:14, (The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 48). Denney declares that reconciliation is not the nature of Christ, but His task, (The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 240. cf. p. 181-182, 286-287; The Death Of Christ, p. 125-126, also, p. 21, 233-234, 320 ff). And, Forsyth says that the key to the Incarnation is not in the cradle but in the Cross, (The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 116; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 317; "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 143; The Justification Of God, p. 93-94).

The development which we have traced thus far, namely, that in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth God was manifest in the flesh in the Incarnation of Christ and that He lived a truly human life sharing in a genuine way human experiences, is fundamental to the doctrine of the Atonement. And that these men were aware of this is indisputable. For example, Dale acknowledges that his theory is erected upon this doctrine both in its relation to God and to man,

Our whole conception of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ rests upon our faith in His Divine dignity. He was the Son of God. But He was also the Son of man. That it should have been possible for a Divine person to reveal Himself under the conditions of human nature, and in human history, is very wonderful, and throws an intense light on the vast possibilities of perfection which belong to our race.¹

There is a striking parallel between the position advanced by Dr. Hodgson and that which we have developed from the writings of these three men. In addition to the fact, as we have shown, that Dr. Hodgson maintains both that God was made flesh in Christ and that Christ lived a genuine human life, Christ is the root of our life, the goal of our development, and the foundation of our response to His redeeming work on the Cross. Thus we see in Him both a similarity between ourselves and Him and a profound difference,

To be human is to be the conscious subject of experiences mediated through a body in space and time. That is common to us and to Him. But whereas at the conception of each one of us there was an absolutely new beginning, the beginning of a process which, if all went well might ultimately issue in the existence of a human hypostasis, He was unique in that His conception was the entry upon the experience of human life of One who was and is fully hypostatized as a Person in the Blessed Trinity. To the Christian believer His was the only human life that has ever been lived which had at its centre a fully real hypostasis. The mistake we make is to take our own humanity as the standard and measure His manhood by ours. We ought rather to measure ours by His, for His humanity, so far from being less real than ours, was more so. Indeed, we shall find grounds for believing that we only become truly and fully human selves in so far as we find our selves in Him.²

¹Dale, Preface, p. lvii-lviii.

²Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 84-85.

(e) Finally, it remains to reinforce what we have been saying by repeating that the sum total of the actual and ideal relations which obtain between Christ and the race prior to, in, and subsequent to redemption rest on the eternal relations of the persons of the Trinity to one another. We are forced at the critical juncture of the doctrine, both in respect of the objective element of the Atonement and in respect of its relation to the world and men, to seek for its rationale in the Trinity as the unique, the vital, the most profound doctrine of Christianity. It is here that Dale shows himself at his best, and where he has perhaps been least understood. For while the ontological Trinity also stands at the heart of the theories advanced by Denney and Forsyth, it was Dale who clearly saw and said that in both relations of the Atonement the solution finally depends upon our understanding of how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit stand related to one another as One God, yet revealed in three persons who are active in the creation of a community of free persons to share with themselves a community of moral life, fellowship, and service to maximize good and the divine glory in the universe. Dale wrote, "the relations between man and God have their ultimate ground in the eternal relations between the Eternal Word and the Father."¹ And, that out of the relations which the believing soul sees to exist between itself and Christ it is able to achieve insights by the Spirit on the nature of the relations which exist between the whole universe and Christ.² When we aim to discover just what the relevance of the Atonement is to the world and men we will move, therefore, within categories that are personal, moral, and teleological, not within a circle of ideas which predicate the self-realization of a divine spirit within the

¹Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 150.

²Dale, Preface, p. xxxi-xxxii. cf. The Atonement, p. 5-7, 251-258.

cosmic flux. We are concerned with a personal God who has revealed Himself by His activity in the course of the history of this world and who, for the redemption of this world from evil and sin as He aims to create it in the image of His own perfection, has entered into it. Incarnate in Jesus Christ, to redeem men as free persons into His fellowship and service. We are thus concerned not with the categories of idealism such as immanence or impersonal force striving to become personal; but with Creation, Incarnation, and Atonement;¹ and the doctrine we construct from what we know of the revelation of God will be consistent with reason, with our moral consciousness, with what we have experienced of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, and with the final purpose to which God aims to bring His creation.

Now that we have identified and discussed the principles on which the relation of Christ's work to the world and men will be constructed, we must revert again to certain of the critics to see that for the most part their criticisms of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth fail before they touch the developed form of the doctrine because they have not taken seriously the principles we have set forward. Dr. Horton fails to see the importance Dale attaches to the fact that God is in Christ incarnate, and that Christ is the root of the race, so that the divine love is meaningful only within these relations.² Dr. Fairbairn acknowledges that there is a strong personal and moral emphasis in Dale, but decides that the key idea is an undefined mysticism, rather than the theology of the personal relations in the Trinity and between Christ and the race which Dale is anxious to establish.³ As we have already pointed out

¹cf. Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 82-83.

²R. F. Horton, Op. Cit., p. 234-235. Several years later Dr. Horton withdrew some of his criticisms against penal theories adopting a mediating position between opposing views, and he commended Dale for his insistence upon maintaining the principle of righteousness, (The Atonement And Modern Religious Thought, Op. Cit., p. 125-156).

³A. M. Fairbairn, Op. Cit., p. 705-706, 716-717. Denney criticizes Dr. Fairbairn for stating that a Johanne mysticism is the fundamental principle of Dale's theology, "Dr. Dale's Life", British Weekly, Nov. 17, 1898, p. 89.

that Dr. Scott Lidgett's criticisms fail chiefly because he decides that Dale's theory is essentially transactional, we need only note here that he has not taken seriously Dale's account of the way Christ is related to the race. Similarly, Dr. Tymms can say of Dale's theory that it conceives of the revelation of the divine love as secondary and incidental because he has not given due consideration to the second part of Dale's exposition.¹ Dr. Stevens, too, thinks that the key to Dale's theory is the strong mystical element of Christ's relation to the race, and that Dale's theory is hazy, but he fails to develop this as a criticism.² Also, of Denney, Dr. Stevens declares that the death of Christ is the basis for his development of the "ethico-mystical" conclusions of the Apostle Paul, though he does not amplify this.³ Dr. Warfield charged Denney with relativism when he reviewed The Atonement And The Modern Mind, declaring that the emphasis upon human response and upon the experiential motif in his construction of the doctrine militates against the authority of Scripture. This is in marked contrast to most critics of Denney, but is largely understandable in the light of Dr. Warfield's hyper-Calvinistic presuppositions.⁴ In addition to attributing wrongly to Dale a quantitative penal substitutionary theory as we have seen, Dr. Moberly fails to deal seriously with the relation of Christ to the race, except to say that it is inconsistent to set this forward in such a theory.⁵ Dr. Franks can say that Dale fails to delineate fully the relation of Christ to the race only because he has failed to take account of what Dale wrote.⁶ Dr. Rashdall's insistence that in Atonement

¹T. V. Tymms, Op. Cit., p. 176.

²G. B. Stevens, Op. Cit., p. 190, 385.

³Ibid., p. 70.

⁴B. B. Warfield, The Princeton Theological Review, vol. II, 1904, p. 702-704.

⁵R. C. Moberly, Op. Cit., p. 393, 395. Note also Vincent Taylor, The Cross Of Christ; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1956, p. 76.

⁶R. S. Franks, Op. Cit., p. 421.

Dale says that Christ is punished for the sinner's sin by means of an immoral transfer fails to take account of the two vital elements Dale had stressed, namely, that the solution must be sought in the relations of the Trinity and in the universal relation Christ sustains to the race. The difference between Dr. Rashdall and Dale cannot be overstressed on this point because Dale affirms that in Christ God was manifest in the flesh and that Christ was yet a true man, the universal man.¹ For Dale, Christ was more than a man amongst men; He was God manifest in the flesh and therefore He determined in Himself all the relations between God and man. It is pointless to make the Atonement a four-party transaction between God, the law, Christ, and man in Dale's theory as Dr. Rashdall attempts to do when Dale consciously rejects this and in fact advances something qualitatively different as we have shown. Similarly, Dr. Oman seems to feel that any form of satisfaction theory is inadequate because, he says, it attempts to set right a moral issue by a legal device. And, while there are obvious analogies between the Christian conception of Christ as the universal man and platonic universals, Dr. Oman has not grasped the distinctive character and importance of the view maintained by these three men on the universal relation of Christ to the race. If Christ is God manifest in the flesh there must be an essential and original moral relation between His humanity and ours in virtue of which we depend upon Him for our life and destiny. However, he acknowledges that Dale, Denney, and Forsyth are able in view of their theology to reach out for a reality which does not seem to concern Dr. Rashdall, namely, a cure for sin.²

Dr. Grensted's criticism that essentially Dale takes a mystical approach to the relevance of the Atonement to the race is in part true,

¹Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 493-496.

²J. Oman, The Journal Of Theological Studies, April, 1920, p. 269-270.

but he does not give an account of precisely what this element is; though he commends Denney's later books, especially, for the power of the moral appeal they harbour whereby, he suggests, the rigour of the penal theory is mitigated.¹ And to say that with the publication of The Atonement And The Modern Mind Denney has abandoned his earlier position, is to fail to take account of a pattern of thought which clearly pervades all of Denney's theological writings but which is made more explicit in the later books because of the misunderstanding of the earlier writings. Dr. Mackintosh's criticism that the substance of the manward relation of the Cross in Dale's view is simply that so long as in some sense a man sees Christ as Saviour he is within the circle of blessing does not deal adequately with Dale's discussion of this important aspect of the doctrine.² It is clear from the foregoing that these critics have not made a serious enough attempt to discover the teaching of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth on the relations of Christ's work to the race. Similarly, while Canon Mozley devotes a great deal of space to the objective element in Dale he says extremely little about the subjective side. Neither does Canon Mozley discuss this aspect in his summary of Denney's theory leaving the impression that the application of Atonement means simply a form of union with Christ without defining it beyond saying that it is moral. He concedes that Forsyth maintained that there is an organic and spiritual solidarity between Christ and the race, and that the principal effect of the Cross is moral as it moves us to penitence and faith. This is probably the closest that the critics of these three men come to expounding the manward relation. Also, Canon Mozley is aware

¹L. W. Grensted, Op. Cit., p. 318, 353; 323-324.

²Robert Mackintosh, Op. Cit., p. 192. On this note also H. W. Clark, The Cross And The Eternal Order; London: Lutterworth Press, 1943, p. 160.

that the thrust of Forsyth's theory is the provision of an atonement cosmic and racial in scope.¹ We have already noted that Dr. Cave² does not go beyond declaring that union with Christ comprises the subjective element of the Atonement for Dale, and this is true also of Dr. Hughes³ on Dale, Denney, and Forsyth; and finally, Mr. Escott and Mr. Griffith fail to discuss this point in Forsyth.

The critics of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, with the exception of Canon Mozley who provides a sympathetic but limited assessment of Forsyth's teaching, fail for several reasons. First, there is a general failure to take the relation of the work of Christ to the world and men in an objective theory seriously. It is often assumed a priori that an atonement which is a finished work in the Godward relation empties the manward side of real meaning. Second, and probably because of the foregoing, there is a general failure to take account of the material in these writers on this aspect of the doctrine. Thus Dale's tenth chapter of The Atonement receives little attention among the critics, and his other writings on this subject are generally ignored. And this is true equally of Denney's books and the more so of Forsyth whose opinions must be ferreted out from his general writings. Third, there is a general failure to note that the primary reference of the Atonement is cosmic and racial, and then individual. In the theories of these men the relevance of the Atonement goes beyond the limitations, and ambiguities, of the term subjective to embrace the moral order and the world, the race as a whole, and finally the individual in the redemptive purposes of God.

¹J. K. Mozley, Op. Cit., p. 177ff, 180 ff, 186 ff. Note also F. W. Dillistone, The Significance Of The Cross; London: Lutterworth Press, 1945, p. 52, 126 ff.

²Sydney Cave, Op. Cit., p. 225.

³T. H. Hughes, Op.Cit., p. 82, 91, 44-45.

We may now proceed to erect on the foundation of the foregoing principles a doctrine that will be the complement of the objective element we have discussed and definitive of the relation of Christ's work to the world and mankind. While it will be impossible to exclude the relevance of the objective element by which it is said that God Himself in the Atonement bears the evil, the orientation of the discussion will be chiefly around the fact that in Atonement God gives or sacrifices His Son for the redemption of the world. That Dale, Denney, and Forsyth held this part of their doctrine to be essential and that they had much to say about it will be clear from what follows. Of course, while at times they enunciate their ideas without ambiguity, at other times we are led to certain insights and conclusions by means of subtle hints, oblique suggestions, or ideas which follow from certain positions they take. Our discussion will proceed along the lines of eleven general propositions.

I

The heart of the Christian faith has always been that God through Christ forgives sins and in our treatment of the relevance of the Atonement to the world and men it is well to begin here by showing that the Atonement is an eternal act of sin-bearing love by means of which God forgives sins and the power of which is released into the world. This discussion, therefore, is an extension of the fourth proposition identifying the objective element of the Atonement in Chapter I (pp. 71-76); but a more conscious effort to relate it to the race will be made here. We aim to exhibit the transitive power of vicariousness to forgive, heal, and restore.

Certain preliminary problems attached to the doctrine of forgiveness exercised Dale and Denney in particular in no small way. First, the remission of sins is possible. Both Dale and Denney replied to those who said that the law of punishment against sin must be worked out to the veriest jot and tittle that they confused the action of physical and moral law, and that remission operates with the context of the latter, i.e., personal moral relations.¹ Second, they deny that forgiveness follows logically from the love of God without remission, i.e., forgiveness cannot be taken for granted; it is not a mere formality.² And third, while it is true, said Dale, that forgiveness and the restoration of human character to the image of God always go together they are not the same; remission is the ground of restoration.³

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 320-321, 334-335. Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 299-301; Questions Of Faith, p. 156-160; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 78-80; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 219.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 338, 345-346. Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 299-301.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 338.

It must be borne in mind that sin is fundamentally personal act against God who is personal and holy; thus forgiveness must be conceived of in personal and moral categories. We have been concerned thus far with the moral and personal relations God and man sustain to each other in the community of life which they both share, and, when we speak of forgiveness we ought to preserve both the moral character of this relation (i.e., vindicate righteousness) and its personal element in which alone forgiveness is meaningful. While forgiveness therefore in the nature of the case must take account of the moral order and the penal consequences of sin, what we are concerned with here specifically, are the personal relations between God and man through the Atonement in virtue of which forgiveness of sins is granted. The former element dealing with the punishment of sin and the vindication of righteousness will concern us more directly in sections V and VI of this chapter. We aim here to declare the fact and display the power of vicariousness in the transitive relation rather than to show that the Cross vindicates righteousness. But that these relations interpenetrate and are dependent upon one another will be clear from the following elements which forgiveness ought to take account of, i.e., in which it must be grounded; or, which ought to follow from its being granted. First, sin can be forgiven only in a manner which will not violate, but rather, which will uphold righteousness. Second, remission must involve the absorption or frustration of evil whereby it is robbed of its power to work ill. The forgiveness will fail if the evil which is forgiven is allowed to continue its work elsewhere. Third, the forgiveness to be effective must give peace to the forgiven, i.e., the assurance that his sin has been dealt with adequately so that his conscience can be at rest. In other words,

because he is forgiven, the sinner dares to forgive himself. Fourth, this forgiveness ought to work as a transforming power in human life, regenerating and energizing men to do good. Fifth, thus mankind must be brought to share in the maximizing of good in the universe as co-workers with God. And sixth, all this must be achieved not over but through freedom; i.e., while the work is a finished work and achieves a moral victory in the world (as we shall show in section III) the sinner must be won by love and goodness to share freely with the God who in Christ forgives, His work of redeeming the world.

It will be our task now to show that through the Cross God has granted this kind of forgiveness of sins to mankind. The argument will be built up on three points: first, that vicariousness is a real and vital element of moral experience; second, that the Atonement emerges from the divine love as the perfect illustration or act of vicarious love; and third, that the Cross is an act not simply of love, but of sin-bearing love. That is, in the Cross God has borne the evil of man's sin -- He has earned the right to forgive sin by bearing its cost in a manner consistent with His own character and the character of the moral and personal relations which exist between Himself and the race.

1. The Cross illustrates and vindicates the principle, Dale says, we noted, that it is "greater to endure suffering than to inflict it."¹ We do not know, he once said, the inner life of God, but we are created in His image and our souls are cut to the quick if we think, even for a transient moment, of the evils He has to behold and of the suffering which came to

¹Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 83.

Him in bearing them. We are called upon, adds Dale, to give free utterance to the divine love which throbs in His heart.¹ Vicariousness, he had said in his address at the funeral of J. A. James, is the central fact of the Atonement and his lectures on the Atonement delivered sixteen years later were but an exposition of this key idea.² This same principle pervades the theory of Denney, that is, as characterizing both the act of Christ and the calling of those who believe on Him. One of the conditions, he said, of our new life in Christ is suffering for its own sake.³ It is a manifest fact of experience that love is able to go out of itself to make the burden of others its own, he said. This is the radical principle of all morality.⁴ Vicariousness, declared Forsyth, is capable of sanctifying the punishment or evil borne to the good both of the guilty and those who witness the act of sin-bearing love;⁵ it is the essence of the power of Christianity which enables it to transform society;⁶ with the Cross a new law enters into the world, the law of subordination, the principle of sacrifice.⁷

2. The Cross is the revelation of divine love; it emerges from love. This is perhaps the principle which is the easiest to establish from the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, but which has received scant or unsympathetic attention from their critics as being either

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 35.

²Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 25.

³Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 291. cf. p. 385, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 13.

⁴Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 103.

⁵Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 87-88.

⁶Forsyth, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 126.

⁷Forsyth, Christ On Parnassus; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911, p. 119.

absent from their theories or inconsistent with the objective element. Of the many references which could be cited only a few will be given to establish the point. Dale said that the "gospel is the revelation to mankind of God's tender compassion and infinite love;"¹ the task of Christian missions is "to tell them ... that the Living God loves them -- loves them all -- loves them with an infinite love;"² the Scriptures declare, in both testaments, that we are "the constant objects of the divine thought, solititude, and care;"³ when we seek to confront men with the claims of Christ "let us dwell upon the love which moved Him to descend from His eternal throne ... upon His eagerness to seek and to save that which was lost;"⁴ people used to believe that God does not love all men alike, but the truth is that "God does love all men alike," he said;⁵ the Cross is the supreme power of the gospel, "and the power of the Cross is the power of the love of Christ" in the fact that Christ loved and died for all men;⁶ in the living God we discover "a spontaneous personal affection, an affection for individual men;"⁷ and, it is the function of the Church to declare the love of God of which the death of Christ is the final proof.⁸

This theme dominates the writings of Principal Denney to such a large extent that the references noted here in support of his views can be only fractional of what could be quoted. The Cross is inscribed, said Denney, with the words "God is love" and we must never fall below this conception;⁹

¹Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 30.

²Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 21-22, 24.

³Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 47.

⁴Dale, Christ And The Controversies Of Christendom, p. 23.

⁵Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 195.

⁶Dale, Nine Lectures On Preaching, p. 209-210.

⁷Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 183. cf. p. 32.

⁸Dale, The Atonement, p. 242, 347.

⁹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 124; The Death Of Christ, p. 328.

the natural relation of God to man is a relation of love;¹ the Christian Gospel proclaims the love of God and awaits the human response of answering love;² love is the redeeming feature of Jesus' goodness and the genesis of reconciliation,

The life of Jesus, from beginning to end, is in all its relations to others a life of love. It is love, then, we have to understand. Without love, there could be no reconciliation, and what we have to discover is how love functions -- what it does, or promises, in relation to man as a being in need of reconciliation to God.³

The Cross is the locus, the pledge, the symbol of the divine love;⁴ the death of Christ for our sins defines the extent and significance of God's love for us;⁵ the fundamental doctrine of the Apostles, declares Denney, is that the Atonement originates in or is related on the one hand to the love of God and Christ, and on the other it is related to human sin;⁶ nothing possesses the reconciling or restorative power like love which, in spite of guilt, distrust, and fear, wins the confidence of the sinful;⁷ and finally, in an expression which sums up all of the foregoing, Denney declares that love is the final reality of the world. Forgiveness, he says, is possible only because God is love and because He

asserts His love as the last reality in the universe in the face of and above the tragic reality of sin ... What is that other, that transcendent and ultimate reality, that brings hope to despair? It is the love of God.⁸

¹Denney, On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 28; St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans, p. 572.

²Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 370; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 125; Studies In Theology, p. 102.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 255.

⁴Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 371; Questions Of Faith, p. 168; The Way Everlasting, p. 143 ff.

⁵Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 194-195; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 84.

⁶Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 123-126, 140, 212-216, 264-267, 284; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 103-106.

⁷Questions Of Faith, p. 168; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 218, 274.

⁸Denney, Questions Of Faith, p. 169-170.

And Forsyth says that the Cross sums up the infinite, ultimate love of God;¹ Christianity is the religion of holy love;² the divine love for us is eternal and unchanging, therefore reconciliation is not the result of a change in God from wrath to love;³ and, for us to trust this eternal act of love so as to make it the principle of our lives is the substance of faith.⁴

3. In our discussion thus far we have observed that in the theology of these three writers, vicariousness is an important moral principle of personal experience, and that the Atonement originates in the divine love which is the final reality of the world and definitive along with holiness of the relations between God and man. We must now show that the Cross is the supreme expression of this principle of vicariousness as the divine act of redemption, an act not simply of exhibiting love, but of performing a work of sin-bearing love which is full of power to forgive mankind, to redeem and to regenerate, and all of which is accomplished upon a moral footing.

The first way in which the meaning of the Cross in this context is made clear, is by comprehending that Christ's work was an act of self-sacrifice; an act from which not only the freeness of forgiveness proceeds but in which its cost is declared and paid by Christ's bearing in His holy love the sin of the world. We have already observed Dale's insistence that to deny to Christ the bearing of the world's woe means that we thereby do not exalt the mercy of God, rather, we involuntarily deny to Him

¹Forsyth, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 69.

²Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 302; The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 90.

³Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 180.

⁴Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 190; Religion In Recent Art, p. 141-142.

the crown of His human love which is "self-sacrifice on behalf of those whom love desires to bless,"¹ but the chief point of our interest concerns the cost of forgiveness which must be met and the fulfillment of this in Christ's bearing of sin. It is the sufferings which are attached to sin as its punishment that Christ bears, said Dale.²

Denney makes this point clear in the following, declaring also that human consciousness witnesses to the truth of this idea and experience as an essential element of the moral life. The way to forgiveness, he says, is in Jesus Christ,

It is in His company that you will learn the possibility and reality of pardon; and you will learn these things as you learn all that is great and priceless in life -- as you learn to believe in God or in the love of your mother -- in ways too subtle and complicated for any doctrinal statement. But you will learn this also, if you learn anything, that the forgiveness of which we are assured in Christ is forgiveness that has come to us at great cost ... Now it is this cost of forgiveness, this passion in the love of God, this tragic element in redemption, to which theologians from St. Paul down have sought to give expression in their doctrines of atonement. A doctrine of atonement is a doctrine of the cost of forgiveness to God. In any given form it may be very inadequate to the truth; in any form whatever it is sure to be in some way inadequate. But who will deny that forgiveness does cost? Who does not feel that a cheap forgiveness-- a forgiveness which costs God nothing and which really means that sin is nothing to Him -- is itself a kind of moral horror?³

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 25.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 391-393.

³Denney, Questions Of Faith, p. 173-174. The question, he says, is not whether God forgives, but how? "Not even whether He forgives freely, but whether His free forgiveness is easy or difficult, costly or cheap, an unspeakable gift or a trivial one. It was a sound instinct that made the Church as a whole cling to the idea of a difficult, costly, and overpowering forgiveness, and reject and even resent a criticism of the idea of satisfaction -- and of God making satisfaction to Himself -- by which the character of forgiveness is imperilled," The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 102; and, p. 133. cf. also The Death Of Christ, p. 45, 55, 329-330, and, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 15, 80-81. The similarity between Denney's viewpoint and that put forward more recently by Dr. Donald Baillie is clear; cf. D. M. Baillie, God Was In Christ; London: Faber and Faber, 1951, p. 172-174.

Forsyth's position is parallel. Why may we not say, he asks, that the Atonement cost the Father at least as much as the Son?

The Son in His greatest work could do nothing but what He saw the Father do. Whatever He offered to the Father, He only gave back His own. God Himself set forth the propitiation of Christ. When Christ redeemed His Church He could do nothing but the Father's work. The Cross is God working in Christ. Shall we say suffering? Why not?¹

"God alone", he wrote, "could fulfill for us the holy law He never broke, and pay the cost He never incurred,"² and this freeness and costliness of the divine love at once makes it harder and easier for God to forgive. We need only recall also that Forsyth had written that every remission imperils the sancity of the law unless the one who remits sin suffers something in the penalty foregone; and this is the meaning of the atoning suffering of the Cross which, as essential to the revelation of the divine love, Christ bears for us.³

The costliness of the Atonement and in virtue of which forgiveness is granted is Christ's bearing of the world's sin. Thus Dale can say that Christ's endurance of the sufferings of sin is the "grandest moment in the moral history of God."⁴ In His baptism, declares Denney, Jesus identified Himself with sinners making all their responsibilities His own, "it was 'a great act of loving communion with our misery', and in that hour, in the will and act of Jesus, the work of atonement was begun."⁵ The deepest thing we can know about God, he said, is "that there is love in Him which bears in all its reality the sin of the world."⁶ We cannot

¹Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 28.

²Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 36. cf. p. 31-37. Following this quotation he said, "And He has paid it ... the quality of mercy is not strained."

³Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 88. cf. The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 52.

⁴Dale, The Atonement, p. 393.

⁵Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 21.

⁶Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 291.

understand the life of Jesus apart from love, and without love there could be no reconciliation; but it is a sin-bearing love, he declares, which not only takes the burden of sin to itself but is able also by the same act to win the faith of men,

Jesus who was born into our race and our lot made Himself one with us in love to the uttermost ... Above all He took that heaviest burden under which the race was sinking with despair and death. He bore our sins. In every sense and to every extent to which love could do so. He made them His own ... He bore it in a love which entered victoriously into sinful hearts and reconciled them to God.¹

The emphasis here by Forsyth falls upon the necessity of satisfying holiness in love; love can act only in such a way as to do justice to holiness which involves bearing the suffering of sin in itself, "God's love then is love in holy action, in forgiveness, in redemption."² The love of God is not procured by sacrifice, it is love that sacrifices, that bears the cost of redeeming,

Fatherhood is not bought from holiness by any cross; it is holiness itself that pays. It is love that expiates. Do not say "God is love. Why atone?" The New Testament says "God has atoned. What love!" The ruling passion of the Saviour's holy God is this passion to atone and to redeem.³

What is essential to comprehend about the Atonement, declares Forsyth, is not that in the Cross God receives sacrifice but makes it; the power of sacrifice must be carried into the Godhead and this is what the Atonement

¹Ibid., p. 250-251, 253. cf. p. 255-258.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 353.

³Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 9-10. cf. The Justification Of God, p. 147.

as a divine act and as revelatory of the divine nature and redemptive purpose declares to us.¹

The manner in which this sin-bearing love brings forgiveness and restoration to humanity is made more explicit in the theology of Denney and Forsyth than it is in Dale. However, he does say, with Denney, that Christ's bearing of the world's sin earns for Him the right to forgive sins;² and that forgiveness may be defined within the context of three terms: namely, as personal, i.e., as a cessation of the anger or moral resentment of God against sin; as ethical, i.e., as release from the guilt of sin, which oppresses the conscience; and, as legal, i.e., as a remission of the punishment of sin, which is eternal death.³ But clearly for all three writers forgiveness is free because it is the gift of God's grace and the cost of it has been borne by God. The ultimate truth about forgiveness, says Denney, is that "sin is forgiven as it is borne;"⁴ and Forsyth maintains that only through the Atonement in which the world's sin

¹The one thing which it is the business of Revelation to let us know about the depths of eternal Godhead is this, that its Divinest power is the power to resign, to sacrifice, to descend, to obey, to save. The key to the prehistoric Godhead is the historic Jesus, and His historic obedience, even to the historic cross. And I could almost think that the deepest error which has blinded and lamed Christianity in the world, the root of every other perversion and failure, is indicated here. It is in having conceived of God as a being whose first and Divinest work was to receive sacrifice instead of offering it -- one who demanded sacrifices He had never made. Deep into the fabric of Christian thought and habit has struck this pagan strain, that it is God's one royal work to accept sacrifice, and man's one saving duty to offer it. The Christian note is quite other. In the face of all the paganisms, ancient and modern, it is bold and original in the extreme. It not only carries into Godhead the power of sacrifice, but it declares this priestliness to be the very saving power of God, the root of all that is glorious in everlasting glory, or kingly in the King of kings. 'God so loved that He gave'. The Divine King is King because He is Priest', The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 124-126.

²Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 200. cf. Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 371.

³Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 67.

⁴Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 162.

is borne away does forgiveness come to us.¹ What forgiveness means is that the personal relations between God and man which have been ruptured by sin are restored. Forgiveness as a possibility, says Denney, is mediated through Christ only in terms of the Cross, but it becomes actual as sinful men open their hearts to receive it and find themselves thereby restored to God,

the heart of the reconciliation lies in the readjustment or restoration of the true personal relation between God and the creature which has lapsed by its own act into alienation from Him; in other words, it consists in the forgiveness of sins ... every one who knows what it is to be forgiven, knows also that forgiveness is the greatest regenerative force in the life of man.²

And, when discussing the effect of the Atonement as a sacrifice of sin-bearing love, Forsyth said,

the effect of that vicarious and loving sacrifice on men must bring them to a repentance and reconciliation which was the one thing that God's gracious love required for restored communion and complete forgiveness ... it satisfied the claim and harmony of His holy nature, and it satisfied the redemptive passion of His gracious heart.³

A further effect which follows from the forgiving power of sin-bearing love is that to which Denney made reference above, namely, its power to

¹Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 252; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 46; The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 3, 9-10.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 6. "It is the plain truth that every one who knows, even in human relations, what it is to forgive or to be forgiven, knows also that it is the most costly and tragic of all experiences", p. 135; "But the one thing in the universe which evokes such faith -- the one thing therefore which brings anyone into union with Christ in the sense of the New Testament -- is the love of Christ in the sense of the New Testament -- is the love of Christ in which He bears our sins in His own body on the tree, p. 303; and, The Death Of Christ, p. 59; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 81.

³Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 86. cf. The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 235; The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 101.

regenerate the life, to transform character. He adds,

The only forgiveness Jesus recognizes is that which makes the forgiven heart the home of the love which forgives; in other words, that by which a man is born again the child of God. Hence, forgiveness or reconciliation is in a strict sense everything in the Christian religion ... True forgiveness regenerates. Justification is the power which sanctifies. The truth, which we can verify in our forgiveness of one another daily, is the ultimate and fundamental truth of the gospel.¹

What this means is that through the Atonement forgiveness as a regenerative power has been released into the world to combat, frustrate, and absorb all forms of evil, and to bring peace, restoration, and new life to mankind. We cannot do justice to the fact of Christ both in His life and redeeming death unless we take account of this virtue which flows from Him which is able to convict, to convert, and to restore men to the Father, said Denney.² The response of faith to such an act, is he says, almost inevitable,

Faith fills the New Testament as completely as Christ does: it is the correlative of Christ wherever Christ touches the life of man ... it is that for which Christ, as the author of the work of reconciliation, by the nature of the case appeals, and when His appeal is met by the response of faith, the faith itself is natural, spontaneous, and in a sense inevitable. It is the right reaction to a new reality brought into the sinner's environment -- a new reality so profound and final that the right reaction to it completely transforms him, making him in Scripture language a new creature.³

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 137.

²Ibid., p. 17. cf. p. 134-135.

³Ibid., p. 287-288. In the following Forsyth expresses the same idea, "We ask, believing that God has broken sin in principle once for all. In grace He has forgiven the world. We ask that this may be carried home to us ... It is the great thing to realize that the forgiving grace of God is the deepest, mightiest, most permanent and persistent power in the moral world ... There is a universe of moral forces and soul powers about us, shaping us more really than our physical world does, and all its forces", "The Problem Of Forgiveness In The Lord's Prayer", Op. Cit., p. 190. cf. p. 205.

From the discussion thus far it will be clear that the traditional terms associated with the Atonement as these in particular describe the work of Christ in the manward relation or in His redeeming activity as the God-man, are to be understood not as strict legal or juridical terms, or penal equivalents in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, but as illustrations of the moral truths and spiritual experiences which we have shown exhibit for us the meaning of the Atonement as an act of sin-bearing love. Thus, Dale declares that Christ's death was a vicarious death or a death "for us", "for our sins", "in our stead"; meaning, that the sufferings, the issue of sin, were borne by Him so that through this act forgiveness might be ours; it was an expiation because it renders the punishment of sin upon us unnecessary; it was a ransom because we are redeemed from the calamities of sin; it was a sacrifice for sins which we could never have made for ourselves; and, it was a propitiation in the sense that God Himself provided it to restore us into personal relations with Himself.¹ Denney defines reconciliation as the restoration through the bearing of sin and evil by God in Christ not only of man, but of the world to God, and sacrifice is the means by which this is achieved;² it is God who provides the propitiation and we are to look for its meaning, he says, not in any peculiarities of Jewish or pagan history, but in the human conscience which is common to both. Propitiation is a serious dealing with God's condemnation of sin for its removal and the sin-bearing reveals both the immensity and sanctity of His love.³ The Cross is a ransom, says

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 432-434.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 4-5.

³Ibid., p. 155-156; The Death Of Christ, p. 57-58, 124, 273-276; The Epistle To The Romans, p. 611-613; Studies In Theology, p. 133.

Denney, in the sense of buying back forfeited lives, and, that questions as to how the ransom, as a ransom, was fixed or to whom it was paid are meaningless.¹ Similarly, Forsyth maintains that redemption means simply the deliverance of man from his sin through the redeeming act of God which, as revelation, recreates the soul to take it in.² Reconciliation, he says, is a restoration of personal relations between two people on the basis of atonement, and inclusive of the whole world in a climactic, final, historic act.³ Sacrifice is the divine holiness itself paying the price of redemption, or bearing the evil of sin, though sacrifice of itself has no moral content; this is given to it by the moral character and motive of the one who makes it, honouring and establishing righteousness.⁴ The term "blood", Forsyth wrote, is valuable chiefly because it is capable of a moral appeal to men as an "outward symbol of the real inner sacrifice, which was the offerer's self-oblation".⁵ Expiation cannot mean, he said, any pagan notion of the mollification of God or the placating of His anger,

People object to the pagan suggestions of a word like expiation. But it is the want of the thing, truly and ethically understood, that is the real pagan danger, the absence of any satisfaction in holiness to the grieved holiness of God. It is a satisfaction which man, as he came to his senses, would insist on making even if God did not insist on providing it.⁶

¹Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 45.

²Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 80; The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 71; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 335-336, 344, 361-362; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. viii-ix.

³Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 74.

⁴Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 8-14; Missions In State And Church, p. 20-28, 70; The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 52; The Roots Of A World-Commonwealth; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918, p. 16.

⁵Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 90; note p. 85-104.

⁶Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 318. cf. p. 361-362; The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 75.

Similarly, propitiation is not offered by man but made by God who in Christ out of love provides it; in the Cross, he says,

God's holy love of the world, which did not spare His only Son violence and judgment, had its expression. It had its expression upward in the supreme moral act of Propitiation, and manward in the supreme moral act of Justification.¹

It should be noticed also that in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, sin-bearing love does constitute a moral appeal to the minds and consciences of men winning them to repentance and faith; and, it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise, despite the charge of Dr. Rashdall and others that this element is inconsistent in an objective theory. As an act of sin-bearing love it must be full of moral content; of appeal to the moral sensibilities of man. Such acts constitute powerful appeals in the interpersonal relations of men and there is no reason why an act of God incarnate in Christ should not augment such an appeal immeasurably. Dale said that the spectacle of the Cross arouses the better instincts of men;² it carries conviction where logic fails;³ the mystery of the Cross draws us to Christ's side, he said;⁴ the Atonement appeals directly to the central and enduring elements of the moral life of man;⁵ and, that the life and work of Christ make their own appeal so that "written in light under every line of the narrative of His earthly history, we should recognize His own words: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father'."⁶ For Denney, the idea that Christ died for us is

¹Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 101. cf. Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 365; The Justification Of God, p. 109.

²Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 26.

³Dale, Christ And The Controversies Of Christendom, p. 18-19, 23.

⁴Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 213-214.

⁵Dale, The Atonement, p. 32.

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

possessed with a natural and irresistible constraint for the will;¹ it is Christ's death as a sin-expiating death that draws men, he says,

redeeming love, displayed in the crucified Christ, is the sum of God's word to the world; and all that that word demands from those who would be right with God is the final and unconditional abandonment of the soul to the redeeming love itself. I do not believe that anyone ever got a real sight of Christ and of God's redeeming love in Him without becoming conscious that there is something in it which with all its graciousness is peremptory and inexorable.²

Religion, declared Forsyth, does act like an impression on the consciousness of men; such a vicarious sacrifice as Christ's must bring them to repentance and faith.³

In summing up the foregoing, it is important to bear in mind that the purpose of God in creation and redemption is to uphold goodness in the universe and to guard and nourish freedom -- as a prime value of personal experience -- in man. He therefore in the Atonement bears the evil and sin in love in such a manner as to maximize goodness and to win the free response of man to His love so that man's freedom is heightened. It is this bearing the sin -- this assuming the cost -- and the repentance which it evokes which heightens the pathos of the whole relationship between God and men in forgiveness. As Denney wrote,

Real forgiveness, forgiveness by another whom we have wronged, and in whom there is a love, which forgiveness reveals, able at once to bear the wrong and to inspire the penitence through which we can rise above it is always tragic; and it is tragic on both sides -- to him who has borne the sin which he forgives, and to him who stoops with a penitent heart to be forgiven.⁴

¹Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 194.

²Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 266. cf. "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", p. 638; The Death Of Christ, p. 332; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 163-164.

³Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 86; Faith, Freedom, And The Future; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912, p. 35.

⁴Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 304.

Punishment, we have seen, can occur only between a community and its individuals in which the righteous laws that govern the inter-personal relations of the community are vindicated and the wrong visited with just punishment; but forgiveness is something which happens between persons. It is one person taking the evil to himself, absorbing it, and allowing it to work nothing in him but an increase of his love for the offender and an intensified desire to do him good. It is something which the injured party can do regardless of the response of the offender, as Dr. Hodgson has said;¹ thus, the centre of moral interest in forgiveness is transferred from the offender to the injured party.² What happens both in the world of values and in the world at large, and, perhaps, in the life of the offender will depend upon the reaction of him who has been injured. And the moral power which flows from his reaction reaches others through the mutual interdependence of the race in the community of which all men form a part, and which God deigns to share with them for the furtherance of His eternal purpose to create a race of free persons who fellowship with Him and share in His work. If wrong can be introduced into the moral life of the community to work evil -- as we know from experience is actually the case, said Denney -- then much more is it possible that good should be introduced into it by the act of an individual which will work throughout the whole with reconciling power.³ The work of atonement would be incomplete and the divine resources for the salvation of mankind inadequate, said Dale, if when accomplished the

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 62.

²Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 303.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 193.

redemption failed to win the response of men and to keep them. But God has anticipated this,

The very acts and sufferings which atone for the guilt of the past are a mighty appeal on God's behalf to all the better instincts, to all the nobler passions of the human soul; nor is the principle of fear or the desire of happiness unaddressed. Omnipotence has no place in the region of the moral life, but if it had, we should declare that its highest manifestation was in the motives and influences of which the Cross of Christ is the centre and the origin. This is surely the last grand effort of the Most High to bind to Himself for ever the gratitude, the trust, the veneration of all His moral creatures.¹

In concluding this discussion, the following quotation will show the striking analogies between the position taken by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, and that which Dr. Hodgson has put forward in his study of the Atonement,

All our acts are our creaturely response to our Creator; all our sins, whoever else may be sinned against on the way, are ultimately sins against God. If in spite of our sins we are to believe that God remains good, that in the nature of things the last word lies with goodness and there is for us some hope of restoration, we must be assured that our sins have failed to affect His goodness by making Him either a partner in our evil deed or embittered and revengeful as a result of it. It is this assurance which the Christian church is charged to proclaim to sinners in its preaching of the doctrine of the atonement.²

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 26-27.

²Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 67. Early in his career Dale wrote, "The gospel is the revelation to mankind of God's tender compassion and infinite love. As our own hearts find no rest until those whom we love know of our affection for them, so God desires his children upon the earth to know that all their disobedience, and all their ingratitude, have not wearied his patience, provoked his vengeance, or exhausted his fatherly affection; but that He thinks of them and loves them still. The preacher of the gospel bears this animating commission; he has to give utterance full and strong as human language can offer to the infinite compassion of the heart of God. What theme is there like this...", The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 30.

II

We may now extend certain ideas which emerge from the foregoing discussion to show that in Christ as the living, perfect person who performs this act of sin-bearing love, the power of evil and sin is absorbed, frustrated, shattered, or nullified. Evil finds nothing in Him; the powers of His life yield only and always good for the world and the race so that the power of evil which attacks Him and the issue of sin which He bears are transmuted as powers for maximizing good in the universe and for blessing the race. In His human perfection and vicarious death good is vindicated, won, and established.

God to all Christians, Dale had said, is the acknowledged Moral Ruler of the race and of the whole created universe who wishes to establish goodness and righteousness not by force but by the free concurrence of persons that he creates for fellowship with Himself. It is inconceivable to think of God as other than the eternal good and as other than aiming to establish His goodness as the norm of the universe; therefore, He must destroy evil without destroying man who deserves judgment; and, establish, enhance, and empower goodness as the primary moral power in the universe, which man also acknowledges, but without destroying his freedom. It is evident that what Christ achieves in this connection must be within the context of personal relations -- the relations He sustains to the other members of the Trinity and to the race in Incarnation. We are concerned here with metaphysics only in so far as it is a metaphysic of ethic; our categories must be those of will, personality, and moral action; i.e., they must be teleological primarily, not ontological. The ideas that will be traced out from the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, have received scant attention from their critics and expositors with the exception of Forsyth, but even in his

case these have been commented on within the wider context of the universal relations between God and man in a cosmic atonement (which will properly engage our interest in Section III) rather than along the lines of the personal power of Christ triumphing over evil and establishing good.

It is important to notice before we go further, that the power of Christ in atonement functions within the circle of ethical interdependence of which we have spoken. It is into this that Christ entered in a genuine human life. Dale describes this community of interdependence as a system designed by God for the moral development of man by which he might be encouraged in goodness and prevented from evil,

Nor should we forget that in that system of mutual dependence which God had established as the best moral discipline for man, his defence against many evils and his effective support in right doing, the intellect has a most important ministry. It is God's plan to make us all channels and agents of His goodness to each other. We are a living body, and every member is under obligation to render service to the whole. A moment's consideration will be sufficient to recall numerous illustrations of the magnitude of the benefits which the genius of a few men has conferred upon nations -- upon all mankind.¹

Denney advances a similar doctrine, with the addition of the idea of moral channels, or powers, in the universe to which we add the powers of our own personalities for the increase of either good or evil, as we noted earlier,

But the existence of a common or corporate conscience, of which his² conscience for better or worse is a constituent, implies also the existence of a common moral life, with channels through which reconciling as well as disintegrating influences may flow.³

¹Dale, Genius The Gift Of God, p. 11-12.

²i.e., the individual's.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 193.

It is within this community of moral life that evil and sin find their channels for growth and development and they must be destroyed if God is to redeem the world. As Denney says, the point of contact between God and man in redemption must be a moral dealing with sin.¹ "To redeem", wrote Forsyth, "the sin must be destroyed, a universe reorganized;"² and, that as man grows sin grows, therefore, "the social organism has a common and organic sin. And a collective sin must have a central treatment."³ But how may we conceive of this central treatment when we regard evil as a malignant power? In two ways. First, the evil must be overcome, its power must be frustrated; and second, good as a moral power, as a dynamic, must be enhanced, and, both of these processes as negative and positive sides of a whole must operate through personality, i.e., through the channel created by God as the medium for the creation, apprehension, and transmission of values.

In approaching the first of these in the theology of these three men, we may epitomize what they have to say, and, show the analogy which exists between what they advance and what Dr. Hodgson has written, by drawing attention to a key idea which he has stressed. What evil does, he said, depends upon how it is taken, i.e., it depends on whether or not the power of evil is absorbed by the injured person and transformed for good; and this is precisely what happens in forgiveness.⁴ How Christ has borne in

¹"The Primary Marks Of Christianity", Modern Sermons By World Scholars (ed. Robert Scott and William C. Stiles); London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1909, p. 90.

²Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 25.

³Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 22. cf. The Work Of Christ, p. 111.

⁴Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 60-62.

Himself the stroke of judgment and the brunt of the strength of evil has destroyed their power to work ill, i.e., He has triumphed over evil. Denney says that Christ entered into the bitter realization of what sin was,¹ and that there is a goodness in God which bears sin in all the dreadful reality it has for man.² When we speak of the "merit" of Christ in atonement, he wrote, it is not as if merit is detachable from Christ's person but that salvation occurs within the conditions of the moral world; we are but employing a legal term for a moral value -- the moral value of who Christ is and what He does.³ What Christians see in the Cross is a "goodness which outweighed all the sin of the world and made it impotent; and through that goodness, or rather through Him in whose Passion it was manifested to men, they were reconciled to God."⁴ God set forth Christ as a propitiation, and in His passion He "realized to the uttermost in His own person all that sin meant, One who has drunk the cup our sins had mingled, One who has felt all the waves and billows break over Him in which God's reaction against sin comes home to us sinners," yet out of this flows forgiveness for us.⁵ In other words, the power of evil and the judgment of sin failed to corrupt Him in any way; He had absorbed their thrust fully and broken any power they may have had to work evil completely. And Forsyth's conviction that this is a vital element of Christ's work is unambiguously expressed, for example, in the following,

¹Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 84.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 178. cf. p. 273-274.

³Ibid., p. 23.

⁴Ibid., p. 19.

⁵Ibid., p. 159.

Christ has judged the prince of the world and doomed its principle ... What Christ did was to immortalize the good, and ban the evil, and paralyse Satanic power. And He did it by active holiness. What He won was God's moral victory in sinful man. It was a victory of conscience; and conscience is the most universal thing, the most missionary thing of all.¹

Christ's perfect obedience of holy love in the conditions of sin, death, and judgment, said Forsyth, yield a total action of His person and work through the medium of holiness upon God, the world, and men; thus the key in his doctrine also is the concept of moral power transmitted through will in such a way as to destroy evil and establish good. He says,

This one action of the Holy Saviour's total person was, on its various sides, the destruction of evil, the satisfaction of God, and the sanctification of men. And it is in this moral medium of holiness (if I may so say) that these three effects pass and play into each other with a spiritual interpenetration.²

When we turn to consider this idea on its positive side we observe that with the coming of Christ into the world a new principle or power for good has been introduced into its moral life. There now play upon us forces for good which have been vindicated and empowered by His life and through the moral elements of His submission to death for our sins, and all the attendant blessings which flow from our communion with God in Him. These ideas are put forward in a variety of ways. Dale was fascinated constantly by the idea of the interdependence of the race and of Christ's entrance into it so that by His incarnation a new principle was introduced into the world,

¹Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 17-18. cf. p. 73. Elsewhere Forsyth wrote, "the finished reconciliation, the setting up of the New Covenant by Christ, meant that human guilt was once for all robbed of its power to prevent the consummation of the Kingdom of God," The Work Of Christ, p. 78. cf. p. 55.

²Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 201-202. cf. The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 52. When writing of the Cross as the moral centre of things, he said, "it means the one good thing in the world made absolute -- a good will", The Principle Of Authority, p. 363.

We are not merely akin to each other, we are one with each other. This is partly the reason why it was necessary for God to become man -- if man was to be restored to God. A new element had to be introduced into the common life of the race¹

It will be recalled that Denney had said that in the Atonement God had somehow subsumed evil under good,² and that the power of the love of one suffering for another yet persisting in his love despite the injury brought on by sin is able to redeem because "sin is outweighed by it, it is annulled, exhausted, transcended in it."³ The chief good which flows to us from the Atonement, for Denney, is the forgiveness of sins. In the very act in which sins are forgiven, he said, and as part of the process of forgiving, the divine sense of its reality must be declared. What this means is that only good for the offender flows from the offended person's life who bears in Himself the evil of the other's sin.⁴ When commenting on the sentence from the Lord's prayer "forgive us, as we forgive our debtors" he remarked that there is something in the world which we owe each other which transcends formal obligation, namely, love which is able to overcome past deeds and to reconstitute the personal relations broken by sin through forgiveness,

And that something is love which forgives and which reconstitutes the personal relations wrong had impaired. Here we may confidently argue on our Lord's favourite line: If we who are evil know how to deal with wrong so as to rob it of enduring power and to restore in love the bonds it has broken -- if we who are so weak, and who live in the world of nature and its iron necessities, can give and receive the blessed experience of reconciliation with its incalculable power to neutralize and transcend the past -- much more must the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, be able to forgive sins and restore souls⁵

¹Dale, The Communion Of Saints, p. 37.

²W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 187.

³Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 104.

⁴Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 302.

⁵Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 134.

Thus power working for good and granting forgiveness flows from the Atonement because of the way Christ has absorbed evil and transformed its malignant energy for good. Evil found nothing in Him; the totality of His life-powers were devoted always to good whether in life or on the terrible Cross. Through the work of Christ there does exist, said Forsyth, a moral power in the world which is able "to make itself effective, not only in spite of the wound to it, but by means of that wound."¹ And the cosmic relevance of this reconciling power is set forward by Denney in the following which is also cast along the lines of personality and morality that have formed the foundation of this discussion,

Wrong can be introduced into this common life by the act of an individual, wrong which works throughout the whole with alienating and debasing power, filling men with distrust and dislike of God. But if that is possible, much more -- so must the Christian argue -- is it possible that good should be introduced into it by the act of an individual, good which will work throughout the whole with reconciling power, restoring men to God in trust and love.²

It will be recalled that Dr. Hodgson has laid great stress on this aspect of the significance of Christ's work, "When we remember that He who used His sufferings as fuel to feed the fire of His love was God incarnate, we know that our sins have no power to corrupt the goodness of God. This means that they are powerless to frustrate His good purpose in creation."³

¹Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 149. Sin could not be conquered till it was expressed, he wrote, and this God did in Christ; "He brought evil to a moral head and dealt with it as a unity. He forced a final crisis of the universal conscience to decide it for good," The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 57-58. cf. The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 68-70; The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 81-82.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 193. Already noted previously, p. 135.

³Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 79.

We may add to this in conclusion the declaration of Dale that God has given the principle of interdependence through the vicarious death of Christ a powerful impetus so that in the redeemed community we in fellowship with God should find that it exercises a determinative influence over the whole range of human affairs,

Vicariousness is the central principle of the Divine plan of redemption. We need not wonder therefore, that in order to train us for comprehending our dependence on Christ, and to educate those affections which should centre in Him, and in order, too, to secure a living unity in the moral government of mankind, God should have given this law of interdependence a mighty influence in every province of man's history. He intended us to find hints and traces of the grand idea on which the whole system rests even in its minutest details; and though the atonement of Christ is a transaction necessary and absolutely unique, it has determined the adjustment of all human relationships and the ordering of all human history.¹

¹Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 25-26. cf. A Manual Of Congregational Principles; London: Hodder 1884, p. 22.

III

What we have discussed thus far showing that the work of Christ means that He has performed an act of sin-bearing love by which the power of evil has been nullified and good enhanced leads us logically to the proposition which must now engage our attention, namely, that as a result of this work a moral victory has been won in the world and a finished work accomplished. This means that the moral foundations of the world have been revolutionized so that things are not now on the same footing that they were before the Cross. It means that the relations between God and man have been changed in virtue of which we are received as, and made righteous in, Christ through the enabling goodness which is derived from the power of our new relation to God in Christ. And, that the Atonement involves a "world-interest" of redemption, i.e., that the individual is saved because the race is redeemed and the race is redeemed because of the cosmic reference of Christ's work -- "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

In God, said Dale, we find the perfect ideal of righteousness and goodness and the ally, the strength, and the inspiration of righteousness in all His creatures. God is striving, he continued, with His infinite power and wisdom "to secure the triumph of righteousness in this world and in whatever other worlds righteousness is possible."¹ The divine aim to achieve final righteousness in the world is being vindicated and the moral victory won at the Cross in a final, finished work. An objective, finished atonement, remarked Dale, stands as a continuing assurance and

¹Dale, Atheism And The House Of Commons, p. 5.

appeal to the man who feels helplessly entangled in his sins.¹ And Denney reaffirms frequently the eternal significance of Christ's work as granting salvation for all men and for all times. He writes, "the work of reconciliation, in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished, before the gospel is preached,"² as we noted. There is, wrote Forsyth, finality only in an eternal act of God not in any theological scheme;³ we believe not in a God who, we hope, will be able one day to clear up everything, but in the God for whom "all things are already triumphant, clear, and sure."⁴ The world, the Church, and the individual are to receive a reconciliation which has been achieved finally,

What the Church has to do is to appropriate the thing that has been finally and universally done. We have to enter upon the reconciled position, on the new creation. Individual men have to enter upon that reconciled position, that new covenant, that new relation, which already, in virtue of Christ's Cross, belonged to the race as a whole.⁵

That a finished, objective atonement is necessary for the achievement of the divine purposes in redeeming not only the world and men will be made clear as the argument unfolds. If God is to overcome evil, vindicate righteousness, establish goodness, and maximize true freedom, then a work of cosmic significance and relevance, and final value, must be accomplished which, while not depending upon human response for its meaningfulness, yet invites it and enhances it. This lack of emphasis upon "something accomplished, something done" as a final divine act on the grounds of

¹Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 234.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 145. cf. p. 65. Later he said that New Testament religion is characterized by an assurance which it is impossible to account for except "on the assumption that the one thing needful for the salvation of sinners was once for all done and endured at the cross", The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 284.

³Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 126.

⁴Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 34.

⁵Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 86. cf. p. 186, 221; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 369; The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 256.

which God forgives is the chief lack of the moral influence theory, said Dr. Hodgson. The work of Christ needs to take account of all evil and sin -- past, present, and future -- in an act which is not contingent upon human response for its meaning and effectiveness.¹

Fundamentally, the Atonement signifies that a new moral epoch has dawned for the universe; that the moral foundations of the universe have been revolutionized. Dr. Hodgson describes it as a "completely new stage" in the divine purpose for the world in which, through the personal intrusion of God into history in the person of His Son, He aims to bring to perfection His whole redeemed creation.² Both in theory as well as in practice, he said,

we need to maintain at the heart of the doctrine of the atonement the message of an objective achievement wrought once for all by God in the history of this world, in virtue of which things are not as they were.³

For Dale, the Atonement and Christ's ascension "inaugurate a new moral epoch, not only in the spiritual history of this world, but in the moral government of this entire universe";⁴ "the moral constitution of the universe henceforth rests on the Christian Atonement;"⁵ Christ Himself, he says, is the divine theodicy and promise of the world to come.⁶ It will be recalled that Dale, Denney, and Forsyth all reconstruct the universe around the exalted Christ following on the significance He has in the life of the Church and the lives of Christians throughout her history. Thus, Denney says that the world has become a different place because of the

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 83-84.

²Ibid., p. 117.

³Ibid., p. 149-150.

⁴Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 20. cf. p. 28.

⁵Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 26. cf. Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 219, 248.

⁶Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 86.

work of Christ and its power in it,

The world with Christ and His Passion in it is a different place from the world without Christ and His Passion in it. It is a different place to God, and God's attitude to it is different. Is there any other way to express this than by saying that Christ and His Passion constitute an objective Atonement, and that it is on the basis of this that men are reconciled to God?¹

Forsyth maintains that the death of Christ had its chief effect on the moral order;² the Cross declares, he says, the "public righteousness" of God as a creative and contagious goodness;³ the only final footing we may know is the God of its salvation.⁴ By means of the Cross, he declares, God has created a new moral universe,

The crisis of the Cross is the moral centre and principle of the world, the act that makes a new moral universe; and the response to it is our answer in kind to the last moral reality⁵

This new moral order signifies not only the vindication and establishment of the righteousness of God by the overcoming of evil and forgiveness of sin in the world, but also the heralding of a new moral order, a new community of free persons comprising God and the redeemed into which men are brought through the work of Christ and their union with Him. As an important aspect of our study this will concern us more directly in section X.

What this moral victory in the world, or new moral era which has dawned, means is, first, that the relations between God and the world, including the human race, have been changed; and, second, that within the

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 236. cf. "Preaching Christ", A Dictionary Of Christ And The Gospels (ed. James Hastings); Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1908, II, p. 396.

²Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 60, 66; St. Paul's Christianity, he wrote, "had the Cross of Christ for the turning point of the world", p. 283.

³Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 28. cf. The Roots Of A World Commonwealth, p. 9.

⁴Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 183-184.

⁵Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 178. cf. "Preface" to the first edition of The Justification Of God; London: Duckworth Press, 1916, p. v-vi. The Preface was not included in the edition which is used throughout this essay, issued in 1948.

context of these changed relations there has been achieved a "world-interest" of redemption. One of the chief elements of the apostolic gospel, wrote Dale, is that God is not only ready to be at peace with us in Christ, but that He is at peace already.¹ This is true not only of the relation between God and believing men but of the relation of God to the universe. The Atonement has "re-adjusted the relations between the supreme Sovereign and Lawgiver and all his creatures" so that the consummation of all God's previous designs are bound up in it.² When discussing the Epistle to the Hebrews Dale remarked that the Jewish Christians had not apprehended the magnitude of the change produced by Christ's mission in the religious conditions of man, "they had not understood that Christ had introduced new relations between God and man."³ But his position on this point is most clearly enunciated in a sermon on forgiveness where he says that Christ "accomplished the redemption of mankind, brought the whole race into new relations to God, and also into new relations to the visible and invisible universe."⁴ In other words, Christ's work has reconstituted the existing order of things in which evil and sin have reigned so that not only is man in a state of reconciliation with God through a divine act of redemption, but the whole universe has been affected for good. Clearly, the same

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 345-346.

²Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By the Death Of J. A. James, p.20.

³Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 215. cf. p. 270-271.

⁴Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 150. In a footnote to this Dale adds, "The relations between man and God have their ultimate ground in the eternal relations between the Eternal Word and the Father. Our moral and spiritual position is not an afterthought of God's. But the normal realisation of our ideal position was disturbed by human sin; and it is only because Christ has been 'made sin' for us, and, in His own Person, has raised human nature to a new life in God, that we retain or recover our relations to God through Him"; cf. The Atonement, p. 143.

doctrine is maintained by Denney who, as we saw, reminds us that but for the Atonement God would not be to us what He is and that this is the meaning of an objective work.¹ There is nothing imaginary or fictitious about this relation, he adds, a man "comes into a new relation to God through his faith,"² a relation in which goodness is now possible to him through the new life and power which become his.³ In fact, both in creation and redemption, declares Denney, everything must centre around Christ's work,

The very purpose of the Epistle to the Colossians is to assert the exclusive and perfect mediatorship of Christ, alike in creation and redemption; all that we call being, and all that we call reconciliation, has to be defined by relation to Him, and not by relation to any other persons or powers, visible or invisible⁴

Grace in the Protestant system, says Forsyth, is not an infusion, "but an act and way of God's treatment of us. It is not infused, but exercised",⁵ and this act of grace did not involve a change of feeling -- for God's feeling toward us was always grace -- but a change of relation.⁶ The Pauline doctrine of reconciliation, he says, "meant the total result of Christ's life-work in permanently changing the relation between collective man and God ... altering it from a relation of hostility to one of confidence and peace."⁷

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 237. Noted previously on p. 92.

²Ibid., p. 164. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 100.

³Denney, St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans, p. 616.

⁴Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 115-116.

⁵Forsyth, Rome, Reform, And Reaction, p. 56.

⁶Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 362. cf. "The Problem Of Forgiveness In The Lord's Prayer", Op. Cit., p. 198; and, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 64, where Forsyth says, "Christ came not to say something but to do something. His revelation was action more than instruction. He revealed by redeeming ... It was to effect forgiveness, to set up the relation of forgiveness both in God and man".

⁷Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 54. Later on he wrote of this change of relation not feeling as follows, "The distinction I ask you to observe is between a change of feeling and a change of treatment ... God's feeling toward us never needed to be changed. But God's treatment of us, God's practical relation to us -- that had to change", p. 105.

But before leaving this, something ought to be said about justification as forensic, and sanctification. Does the position taken by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth revive a form of Protestant dogma in which a division is drawn between justification and sanctification that is more than formal, or in which sanctification is minimized? In other words, does this position run the danger of an implicit antinomianism because it advances a formal imputation of righteousness only without a proper accounting of the believer being made righteous actually? There is little actual criticism of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth on this ground, perhaps because the general criticism of their theology that they were advancing theories operating largely outside personality was thought enough. But even among those who do mention this point there is little unanimity of opinion. For example, Dr. Stevens charges that Dale employs the mechanism of a declared righteousness thus dividing justification and sanctification, and that Denney's use of legal terms is sufficient to put him in the category of those theologians who put forward a purely forensic view of justification; whereas, Canon Mozley maintains that Denney does not advance a purely forensic view even though the Atonement is said by him to be in the first instance an act outside of us.¹

We are justified by faith on the ground of the death of Christ, said Dale, and forgiven,² but this he conceives of not as purely forensic but as a justification in righteousness as we are the sons of God in Christ's Sonship, i.e., both atonement and justification rest on the union between the believer and Christ.³ Justification is not merely declarative, or

¹G. B. Stevens, Op. Cit., p. 341-342, 88, 196; J. K. Mozley, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 126, 181.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 235, 239.

³Dale, The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 51-52.

merely imputation;¹ rather, just as without practical righteousness it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven, justification involves a putting into right moral relation the life of a man previously a sinner, and this must involve in the nature of the case a transformation of personality.² Denney, at a point comparatively early in his theological career, expressed his doubts about the usefulness of the term 'forensic' in describing Christ's dealing with God's condemnation of sin and our justification,³ so that when he followed up the release of The Death Of Christ by the publication of The Atonement And The Modern Mind it is not surprising to learn of his astonishment at being charged with holding a forensic view of justification in the earlier volume.⁴ The distinction, he wrote later, between infused and imputed righteousness is unreal because in redemption the sinner is actually right with God and God treats him as such.⁵ In fact, from the early days of his career to the end, Denney maintained a consistent outlook on this point.⁶ In his last published work there occurs an excellent passage which sets out his position clearly and in part he said,

¹Dale, The Life And Letters Of J. A. James, third edition; London: James Nisbett and Co., 1861, p. 296.

²Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 141-144.

³Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 103, 117, 124.

⁴Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 46. He says, "If one may excuse a personal reference, few things have astonished me more than to be charged with teaching a 'forensic' or 'legal' or 'judicial' doctrine of the Atonement, resting, as such a doctrine must do, on a 'forensic' or 'legal' or 'judicial' conception of man's relation to God ... There is nothing which I should wish to reprobate more whole-heartedly than the conception which is expressed by these words. To say that the relations of God and man are forensic is to say that they are regulated by statute -- that sin is a breach of a statute -- that the sinner is a criminal -- and that God adjudicates on him by interpreting the statute in its application to his case. Everybody knows that this is a travesty of the truth, and it is surprising that any one should be charged with teaching it, or that anyone should applaud himself, as though he were in the foremost files of time, for not believing it."

⁵Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 164-165.

⁶cf. The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 122; and, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 159-164.

Every Christian experience whatsoever -- call it justification, adoption, or sanctification -- call it love, or repentance, or regeneration, or the Spirit -- lies within faith and is dependent upon it ... where Christ or the gospel is the object of faith, faith is as comprehensive as Christ or the gospel, and as little raises any questions about what is or is not merely forensic in its issues ... There is no legal fiction in the matter to explain or to overcome; if we think in terms of a forum -- which we do if we please we must remember that the forum is that of God, and that the verdict there is always according to truth'.¹

And Forsyth complains that the early Protestant theologians failed to connect justification with sanctification convincingly, "they treated the work of Christ in a way far too objective."² The work of Christ is objective and finished, he says, but it is not a forensic device, nor a legal fiction; rather it establishes new relations between God and the world both vindicating God and justifying man in an actual work of grace,

The Cross is not a theological theme, nor a forensic device, but the crisis of the moral universe on a scale far greater than earthly war. It is the theodicy of the whole God dealing with the whole soul of the whole world in holy love, righteous judgment, and redeeming grace. There is no universal ethic but what is based in that power and deed.³

It remains to show that the moral victory which has been won by Christ, and which revolutionizes the moral foundations of the world and changes the relations between God and man, involves a "world-interest" of redemption. This may be shown along the lines of two general emphases; first, that the redeeming work of Christ is primarily racial in scope, and second, that ultimately it cannot be thought of as other than cosmic. The divine end for man, declared Dale, is not the crass individualism which characterized so much of Protestant theology, but a realization of the

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 291.

²Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 220. cf. p. 183, 187. Note also The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 172. In the Preface he had written, "The grace of God in Christ's Cross is not a forensic device, but the moral focus of the universe -- if all centre in the conscience, and morality is the nature of things", p. v.

³Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 133.

principle of interdependence to show that not only is our union with God in Christ important but also our union with one another,

Our final glory will consist, not in the restoration of the solitary soul to solitary communion with God, but in the fellowship of all the blessed with the blessedness of the universe as well as with the blessedness of God.¹

What Christ's death for the sins of the world means, says Dale, is that there is established "a personal relationship between every man and Christ of the most intimate character, a relationship absolutely unique, and affecting in a very vital and fundamental manner the whole range of human hopes and fears and the history and destiny of the race."² The Christ Paul preached, says Denney, "was the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, He who by His death on the Cross became universal Redeemer, and by His ascension Universal Lord;"³ His work had in it the interest of all sinners as the only source of redemption. Few themes were emphasized with more vigour than this by Forsyth for he stressed constantly that the individual is saved by reason of his membership in a redeemed community and that the relevance of the Atonement to men is first racial then individual. The divine purpose, he said, is to redeem mankind,

The object of God's will and purpose of love is mankind as one, mankind as an organism, mankind in its totality -- in its moral totality round the redeeming conscience of Christ and His Reconciliation.⁴

¹Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 108. cf. Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 69-70; The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 18, 25-26. "In an important sense, every member of the human race is a subject of the Lord Jesus", The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 270-271.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 207.

³Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 314. cf. p. 196, 198; The Death Of Christ, p. 95; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 364; "The Primary Marks Of Christianity", Op. Cit., p. 78-79.

⁴Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 118.

The gift of faith, he declared, is given to each man only as a member of a redeemed race; "we are saved only on God's terms of a social redemption. Every man is saved only by the act which saved man."¹ And in the following he sets forward the same idea,

Redemption was effected by Christ for the whole race, and it changed not only its religion but its whole moral condition and ideal. And it does this for the various races within the race. It is well to convert a man, it is more to convert an age.²

Forsyth's vision that the purpose of history involves the fate of the race³ brings us to the final stage of our development, to show that the Cross has achieved a redemption of universal scope and relevance. In Christ, said Dale, the restoration of the universe to an eternal unity has begun.⁴ For Denney, reconciliation involved not only the final achievement of the divine purpose in the universe, but also the reconciliation of the individual to the conditions of life which are his lot by means of a faith which encompasses all things within the unitary concept of the will and purpose of God,

Reconciliation to God is not realised unless it includes reconciliation to the order of God's providence, and to the circumstances of our life as fixed for us by Him. We are not really reconciled by Him if we are at war with the conditions of human existence, and lead a resentful, querulous, or despondent life ... Not only is God a new God, the world is a new world to the reconciled sinner; he is not at war with the conditions of life.⁵

¹Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 91.

²Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 177. In Holy Christian Empire, he said, "I have only been saved by something which, in the same act, also saved the world. It took a world's salvation to save me; and what I know in this matter for me I foreknow for mankind. My salvation has the prophetic spirit of a world's redemption", p. 43. cf. Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 260; The Charter Of The Church, p. 41; The Work Of Christ, p. 96.

³Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 199.

⁴Dale, The Atonement, p. 257. cf. A Manual Of Congregational Principles, p. 128; The Communion Of Saints; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1871, p. 13-14.

⁵Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 178. cf. p. 4-6, 225, 330.

Christian reconciliation which rests upon atonement and redemption, said Forsyth, involves "the world as a cosmic whole. The world as one whole; not a person here and another there, snatched as brands from the burning; not a group here and a group there; but the reconciliation of the whole world;"¹ and further on he states the case unambiguously as follows,

But the gospel deals with the world of men as a whole. It argues the restoration of all things, a new heaven and a new earth. It intends the regeneration of human society as a whole ... Our faith is social and communal in nature. We must have a social gospel. And this you cannot get upon the basis of mere individual or sectional salvation. You can only have a social gospel upon one basis, namely, that Christ saved, reconciled the whole world as a unity, the whole world of society and history.²

In concluding this discussion two things remain to be said. First, the development of this theme is a reflection of the experiential emphasis which is so marked in Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. To say that redemption is individual, racial, and cosmic in any particular order of importance reflects, they suggest, a point of view, that is, God's or man's. From the human standpoint, we begin in individual experience with our sense of sin, guilt, and judgment to find release, life and hope in Christ. It is a large but logical step to go beyond this, as they have done and as the early disciples did, to see that what Christ means to us in and through His Cross is something more than merely individual; it must have implications involving the universe. We are compelled, in the light of who He is and what He has done, to reconstruct our universe around Him. We only know these things, said Forsyth, because we have believed in and received

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 171-2. cf. The Happy Warrior; London: H. R. Allenson, 1898, p. 6; Theology In Church And State, p. 29; "Church, Ministry, And Sacraments", in The Validity Of The Congregational Ministry (ed. J. Vernon Bartlet and J. D. Jones); London: Congregational Union Of England And Wales, 1916, p. 36, 50; The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 193.

the reconciliation of Christ's Cross.¹ Thus from our standpoint the Atonement begins in, extends and broadens out from, our own sharing in this bountiful salvation as our minds are illuminated by the Holy Spirit to see what God is doing and intends to do; and from the Godward side the Atonement is a universal redemptive act including the race and its individuals and bringing them to Himself.

Second, no matter how difficult it is -- even impossible -- for us to escape the ego-centric predicament of our own spiritual interests, we must advance to the recognition that redemption is much more than salvation from sin and judgment; it is salvation to service, to a life of dedicated activity for and with God within the circle of the redeemed community in which He and man share their lives. This is what Br. Hodgson calls looking at the Church from above, or from below.² Seen from above, it is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, called by Him to work for the redemption of the world; but seen from below it is a fellowship of forgiven sinners who are growing up into the divine ideal. The Church is an organ, an instrument upon which He lays increasing responsibilities as her scope of understanding, power of love, and strength to labour are widened, deepened, and increased. When, in 1891, Dale addressed the International Congregational Council he expressed similar sentiments,

Churches exist not merely for the consolation and ultimate salvation of their individual members, but that the Divine life which dwells in Christian men -- developed, invigorated and disciplined by the common worship, by ethical as well as by spiritual instruction, by the atmosphere and the traditions and the public opinion of a society which is the home of Christ and of the Spirit of Christ -- may change and transfigure the whole order of the world.³

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 171. Dr. Hodgson said that the only reason we care about the doctrine of the Atonement is because we have been baptized into that fellowship of sinners upon whom the Spirit came at Pentecost, i.e., into the community through which God is disclosing and working His purpose for a world-redemption in Christ, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 148.

²Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 99-101.

³Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 364.

We must, said Dr. Hodgson, view the divine purpose in creation and redemption from two standpoints: as the divine activity eliciting the response of His creatures for the purpose of creating a community of free, good persons before we will grasp truly what God has done in Christ,

When we see this, we see that when God the Son came personally into human life and wrought His work of atonement, He came not only to fulfil in His perfect manhood the potentiality of previous evolutionary stages, but also to initiate a completely new stage, the stage in which, working in and through His continuing earthly body, He should bring to its perfection His whole redeemed creation.¹

In this we note the theme of this present section -- a cosmic redemption in which man shares and in which he may serve -- and also the theme to which we now turn our attention, namely, that in Christ we have the manifestation of a free, good person who constitutes the divine ideal of the race.

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 117-118.

IV

This next stage of our inquiry compels us to ask, What is it to which redemption is directed in terms of the personal ideal? And the answer leads us to see that in Christ -- in that Person in whom God has revealed Himself within the historical context -- the divine ideal for the race is set up in actuality. Christ both honours righteousness in life and submits to it in death through His free obedience to the divine will. This is the divine purpose in creation. God aims to bring into existence a community of free persons who voluntarily choose righteousness and abhor sin, and who share in the fellowship both of God and their fellow creatures in holy love and service. But when these creatures went astray (which appears as a necessary possibility in the kind of world which God wishes to create) He could not redeem them without their free consent. But in Christ God has done two things. First, He has vindicated His purpose in creation by exhibiting in Christ the perfect life of holy, loving obedience to the will of God. Christ is the realization of human potentiality in the divine purpose. And second, Christ voluntarily laid down that life as a ransom for the redemption of the race of which He became a part, redeeming them in Himself to the possibility and actual realization of His own life in them. Because of Christ and His work freedom is now both ideal and actual for the human race; Christ is Himself the divine theodicy in the race. Freedom is won, vindicated, and established. The writings of Dr. Hodgson are so well known for their emphasis on freedom that only a brief mentioning of his work need be made here to remind us that there are important analogies between his theology and that advanced by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth on this point. He says, "what God is aiming at in creation is a community of persons each making his contribution to the welfare of the whole ... recognition of the creation of finite personal freedom as of

crucial importance in the whole process has implications both for theory and for practice."¹

Probably no other theme which has been overlooked in the theology of Dale, but which is of critical importance to an understanding of what he put forward as the purpose of God in the world and the race through Christ, is more noteworthy than his doctrine of freedom. Important, that is, not only to the proper assessment of what his theology was about, but of what he himself as a Christian was. Dale stood firmly between two theological eras but he warmly grasped both and fused them in the matrix of his own Christian experience. On the one hand, through J. A. James his predecessor at Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, he was connected directly with the spirit of the eighteenth century revival; and on the other, he had to build his theology and exercise his ministry through the period when evolution as a scientific and philosophical theory had been recently adopted, and when Higher Criticism had invaded the theological world. At his ordination he recounted something of his own spiritual history and attempts to find peace and forgiveness as a young man through The Anxious Enquirer, a book written by James which had a phenomenal circulation during the first half of the nineteenth century. It was written to help seekers after salvation to find it. But it failed to give the young Dale the peace he sought. It was not until he heard a sermon by A. J. Morris² in which the emphasis was laid upon the liberty of Christ in dealing with mankind and of the Christian man in Christ comprising the divine purpose, that he found rest.³

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 41. cf. p. 37-38, 42, 59, 75, 80, 91-92, 111; and, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 221.

²A. J. Morris, Christ The Spirit Of Christianity; London: John Gladding, 1849. Based on the text 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty".

³The Ordination Services Of The Rev. R. W. Dale; London: Hamilton, and Co., 1854. cf. The Life And Letters Of J. A. James, p. 301-302. On this point Dale said, "The act of faith is so repeatedly discussed that the mind is likely to be diverted from the object of faith."

The divine purpose, Dale saw, for the race (both spiritual and in relation to the world at large) was a freedom given by God in which man was to enjoy fellowship with his Creator as a redeemed person, and share in the Creator's work of imposing an increasing measure of the divine fullness on the world about him. Man, wrote Dale, appropriates his powers from forces about him; man is like God in the freedom he possesses -- a freedom "to choose the objects of his life, and the means by which he will receive them."¹ God's aim is to create a free race in Christ and to raise it into union with Himself, and it is a relationship not only of privilege but of responsibility also.² In redemption two personal movements occur, he said,

In the redemption of our race we know that the movement of God towards man must be met by a movement of man towards God. We are not saved, apart from our own choice, and by an irresistible force which descends upon us from heaven.³

Every man, declared Denney, is organic to the life of God and also morally responsible and free. The biblical writers regard men, he said, as, being in nature akin to God, capable of fellowship with Him and designed for it, conscious of moral freedom and responsibility, and therefore morally responsible and free.⁴

God is never so absolute, wrote Forsyth, than when He makes freedom.⁵ God Himself is free and He wishes to create in us a freedom that we can never acquire; indeed, the prime condition to human freedom is a God who is Himself absolutely free,⁶ and who desires to win men to communion with Himself.⁷ But this freedom for man can only be achieved when it has found its

¹Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 50. cf. The Atonement, p. 415-417.

²Dale, Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 69-70; Genius The Gift Of God, p. 5; The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 41.

³Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 142-143.

⁴Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 74-75. cf. On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 31.

⁵Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 64, 351.

⁶Ibid., p. 336; The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 87; This Life And The Next, p. 13.

⁷Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 57; "Christ And The Christian Principle", Op. Cit., p. 155.

absolute master, i.e., we are never so free as when we are in willing bondage to God the author of our freedom and guardian of our good. It is to this that we are led in Christ,

We choose this Master and His choice of us ... We choose Him by a moral reciprocity as One who first chose us for His own holiness. We answer His choice in kind. We are free chiefly that we may freely choose our authority as a free grace choosing us ... Our obedience becomes a communion, and our subordination is not inferiority, as the obedient Son is not inferior to the Father.¹

It is in His implicit obedience to the Father's will and assent to the sufferings of the Cross that the divine ideal of freedom is realized for the race in a genuine human life. Christ's perfection was not a static, metaphysical quality of being; but the perfection of moral achievement. He knew the purpose of His life to be the will of God and chose it voluntarily that in Him the ideal possibilities of the race might be realized, that the race through His submission might be redeemed from its sin, that the power of evil might be forever frustrated in and absorbed by His goodness, and that the creative purposes of God might be vindicated. Reconciliation, Denney had written, is not the nature of Christ but His task, it must be morally achieved through the power of a perfect life;

What has value to God and reconciling power with man is not the incarnation conceived as the taking up of human nature into union with the divine; it is the personality of Jesus, fashioned, as every personality is fashioned, through the temptations and conflicts, the fidelities and sacrifices of life and death; the self which is offered to God as a ransom is the self which has acquired in these human experiences its being, its value, and its power; apart from these experiences and what He earned and achieved in them Jesus is nothing to us and has nothing to offer to God.²

Forsyth employs the term redintegration with reference to the relation of the divine Person who was made flesh for us, but this he does to signify the moral

¹Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 309. On p. 272 he wrote, "absolute obedience is the condition of entire freedom". cf. Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 104; and, Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 196-197.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 41. cf. p. 240.

development, quality, and value of Christ's perfect manhood,

The whole moral history of Jesus on earth was the ethical resumption of such personality as he laid down by an act equally ethical in its nature.¹

But it is Dale who stresses the uniqueness of Christ for the race along the lines of two specific and parallel ideas, namely, that Christ is the divine ideal for man and that in Christ human potential is made actual. Our hidden aspirations, he said, find their fulfillment only in Christ; according to the divine idea we were to inherit all the perfections which we have come to know dwelt in Jesus Christ.² Denney defines Christ's uniqueness and ideal character in the following,

He stands over-against the world, and He knows that He has what all men need, and has it in such fullness that all men can obtain it from Him. This is the ultimate proof of His divinity, this is the infallible sign that He is Saviour.³

On the second idea Dale said that for the vindication of the divine creative purpose and our redemption, it became God to "realise in Christ all the possibilities of power and joy which were implanted in man's nature ... to develop in Christ all the possibilities of glory which belong to sinless humanity."⁴ In the following quotation Forsyth sums up the divine

¹Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 288. On p. 342 he says that the living soul must grow into moral personality and that this cannot be ignored in respect of Christ who is both one with us and different from us, in whom the reality of conflict in His moral life was received by His kenotic ignorance, and who was related to a personal, free God not impersonal power. And on p. 351 he says, "But we do mean that as the Eternal Son he was the complete and final action of the holy and gracious love of God our Saviour; that his holy Humanity went up always as an absolute satisfaction and joy to God; that God saw in him the travail of His Own Soul and was satisfied; that in Christ's historic person God offered himself in his saving fullness to and for mankind with the omnipotence required for his saving work."

²Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 50-51, 53; The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 192; The Atonement, p. 420-421.

³Denney, Gospel Questions And Answers, p. 7. Earlier he had said, "God alone is good; Christ alone is the Pattern and the Inspiration of the Christian character", The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 16. Later he issued a caution about the careless use of the term "ideal" when predicated of Christ if by its use more philosophical than religious meaning is intended, Studies In Theology, p. 37 ff.

⁴Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 63. cf. The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 41; "Preliminary Essay", Op. Cit., p. xv-xvii; Christ And The Future Life; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895, p. 150-151; Fellowship With Christ, p. 347-349.

purpose in redemption which aims to secure the freedom which God desires to be the end of human life in communion with Himself,

The true freedom of man springs from the holy sovereignty of God, which we can only know in Christ, in redeeming action. There our freedom has its charter and not its doom. Even if we started psychologically free, the result of the choice of evil is to impair freedom; and an impaired freedom goes on to a destroyed freedom. Who doeth sin is the slave of sin. But God's sovereignty is redemption. He is never so sovereign as there. He is never so absolute as in making freedom.¹

Christ is therefore the divine theodicy; in Him the divine purpose of creating free persons is vindicated. This is partly what Dale means when he insists that Christ in His life and death reveals the righteousness of God. It is in Him -- by reason of our union with Him -- that we recover our ideal relation to God and the perfection of our freedom so that we choose what is good.² The liberty of the Christian man, declared Denney, is the liberty to organize his life in fellowship with God and in accordance with His will; it is to legislate for the life from within.³ And Forsyth declares that the justification of God is not given to us by Christ; it is Christ.⁴ What Christ is and does for our salvation constitutes a powerful moral influence upon us because of the interdependence of free personalities into which He has entered; His one redeeming act is at once, as we noted, the destruction of evil, the satisfaction of God, and the sanctification of men.⁵ In concluding this discussion we may note

¹Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 64.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 423; Preface, p. lxvi-lxvii.

³Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 136.

⁴Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 187, 150-151.

⁵Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 201. cf. "Christ And The Christian Principle", Op. Cit., p. 150.

a statement of Dr. Hodgson's which epitomizes the foregoing and shows in a striking way the similarity of view between him and Dale, Denney, and Forsyth,

In order to respond to our calling to be fellow workers with God in His creative activity, we must never lose sight of the ultimate aim while accommodating ourselves to developing phases. The ultimate aim is perfected freedom. Perfected freedom is self-determination directed by conscious intelligent choice of what is good.¹

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 42.

V

In this section and the succeeding one we shall deal more directly with the penal element of the Atonement to show how the death of Christ is related to the race. More properly, in this section our interest will centre in His actual submission to the judgment of sin -- our judgment -- and in section VI we shall think about His death as the essence, the core, of the judgment He bore. Thus, while in Chapter I, where we identified and elucidated the meaning of the objective element of the Atonement, it lay upon us to show the fact of Christ's bearing the punishment of sin and the issue of evil; here we have to deal with the mode or manner of that submission and obedience. The relation of His obedience in judgment to our reconciliation will engage our attention as we proceed, but a fuller development of this theme will await the discussion of sections VII and VIII.

The principle which underlies the submission of Christ to the judgment of sin is that the righteousness and holiness of God is a thing with which neither God nor man can trifle; it is the law of the relations which govern moral life and responsibility. In atonement, as we have seen, holiness therefore must be vindicated, established, and honoured not over but through judgment. God must deal with sin in a way which will do justice to the moral quality of the righteous personal relations in which alone a community of moral life can be established, but without implicating Himself in sin or allowing the sin to alienate His love from men finally. God must deal with sin, said Denney, and when commenting on Rashdall's theory he remarked that there is something which never comes into it, namely, that "God's condemnation of sin is a terrifically real and serious thing."¹ "All reconstruction of belief", wrote Forsyth, "must begin with the holiness

¹Letters Of Principal James Denney To W. Robertson Nicoll, p. 1. cf. The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 235, 250.

of God."¹ The Cross as an expression of the holiness of God and addressed to it has its meaning expounded in a variety of ways by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. In it Christ makes unreserved submission to the righteousness of God in judgment. He experiences the worst issue of sin that personality can know -- separation from God, i.e., His being forsaken by God upon the Cross. On the Cross Christ owns, praises, and acknowledges judgment in holiness. He identifies Himself with us, becoming sin for us and bearing the curse of our sins. But rather than to collate material from the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth in support of a comprehensive scheme which analyses their views, it is thought useful here to outline briefly the position each takes respectively and then to sum up their views in two important ideas which provide the connection between Christ's penal bearing of judgment and our sins.

1. The death of Christ was unique for three reasons,² said Dale. First, it was the death of the Son of God, i.e., of God manifest in the flesh. This follows from his view that punisher and punished are one. Second, it was a voluntary death. The purpose of Christ's coming into the world was to achieve a perfect moral life and then to lay it down in death for the sin of the world, "He declared that He laid down His life of His own free will, and that no man could take it from Him." And third, in His death He was forsaken of God. Dale acknowledges that this is a great mystery in the light of the unbroken communion which Christ enjoyed with the

¹Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 255; cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. viii. On p. 23 he says, "neither love, grace, faith, nor sin have any but a passing meaning except as they rest on the holiness of God, except as they arise from it, and return to it, except as they satisfy it, show it forth, set it up, and secure it everywhere and forever. Love is but its outgoing; sin is but its defiance; grace is but its action on sin; the cross is but its victory; faith is but its worship".

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 360.

Father, but he refuses to compromise both the anticipation of it in the closing hours of our Lord's life and His actual declaration of it on the Cross. God is free to act in the matter of personal communion, he declares, and the severed communion which Christ experienced was the hall-mark of His true entering into the situation created by our sins. The revelation of the Father's presence was withheld, he says,

because it became Him who had endured the other consequences of human sin -- physical pain of many kinds, and the anguish of wounded love -- to endure this consequence too, and by submitting to the loss of the sense of His Father's presence to confess, by a voluntary act, and not merely in words, that this awful desertion is a just penalty of human transgression.¹

Dale insists that on any theory of the Atonement there ought to be a frank and real consent to the justice of the divine penalties from which we are to be released by that redemption; and this is precisely what Christ has done. The life which submits to judgment can harbour no resentment against the just law, for, "it is an offense to resent the penalties of the eternal Law of Righteousness, as well as to transgress its precepts."² The submission to the justice of the penalties which we ought to give but are unable and without which the granting of remission is morally impossible has been done by Christ,

He did not merely confess our sin; He did not merely acknowledge that we deserved to suffer. He endured the penalties of sin, and so made an actual submission to the authority and righteousness of the principle which those penalties express.³

Later, he wrote that it is impossible that forgiveness of sins be granted unless there occur a frank, unreserved submission on our part to the justice

¹Dale, Preface, p. xliv.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 422.

³Ibid., p. 423. This is how Dale understands the meaning of propitiation. Already in Jesus' day, he says, the "pagan colour" of the term had worn off. It was not a propitiation of divine anger, but a propitiation for sin where "the justice of the Divine displeasure was always and explicitly acknowledged", p. 167.

of God, and, for the race in Christ this submission appears in its ideal form, as transcendently perfect.¹ Christ the eternal Son, the root of our life and righteousness, the person in whom man is summed up, endured death "to render possible our moral consent to the justice of the divine resentment against sin, and to the justice of the penalties in which that resentment might have been revealed."²

2. We have already noted the frequency of occurrence, and force, of penal terminology in the writings of Denney when we approached the objective element of his theory. Clearly Christ's being made sin for us is His identification, His making common cause, with us;³ it is His dying our death -- an expression which occurs frequently in Denney's books.⁴ But if we are to avoid a crass penal transactional view, which Denney claims to avoid, then we must understand these terms in the way Denney intends us to understand them, namely along the lines of the moral quality of Christ's submission to the justice of the penalties for the race in a manner analogous to Dale, so that the righteousness of the divine law is satisfied fully in actual submission and willing consent. Thus both the moral quality of Christ's life and submission and the penal character of His passion cannot be avoided,

There is no intention ... to deny the truth of the view that Christ's death is the moral consummation of His life, and is to be interpreted as such, or to withdraw what has been said about the penal character of His suffering. They were not penal in the sense of coming to Him through a bad conscience, or in the sense that God was angry with Him personally, as if He had really been a guilty man. But they cannot be ignored; ... they were penal in the sense that in that dark hour He had

¹Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 75-77.

²Ibid., p. 83. cf. Christian Doctrine, p. 160, 260, 261, 265. On p. 270 Dale says, "in the realms of ethical and spiritual life there can be no effective giving where there is no receiving; and there can be no receiving of the remission of sin where its guilt and ill-desert are not felt."

³Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 155, 235; Studies In Theology, p. 37-39, 166; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p.197; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 242.

⁴Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 232-233, 100, 149, 186-187, 189, 190; Studies In Theology, p. 110; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 194-195; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 269-274.

to realise to the full the divine reaction against sin in the race in which He was incorporated, and that without doing so to the uttermost He could not have been the Redeemer of that race from sin, or the Reconciler of sinful men to God.¹

The key to Christ's Passion, he says, is His voluntary submission to the justice of the divine penalties. We are not so much concerned with predicating of Christ a perfect confession of sin in the name of the race nor of offering a perfect vicarious penitence to God, but with His actual submission in a perfect life to the penalties which sin had incurred. This is both what satisfies the justice of the divine law which orders the community of life in which God and man share, and what wins men to the response of repentance and faith,

All true penitents are children of the Cross. Their penitence is not their own creation: it is the reaction towards God produced in their souls by this demonstration of what sin is to Him, and of what His love does to reach and win the sinful.²

By His submission to the penalty, by His faith and complete acknowledgment of God's condemnation of sin, He has done what we could not do for ourselves making His mind about sin our own,

If He had not thus seen and felt what sin is to God, if He had not thus acknowledged God's justice in condemning it, we could never have been brought through Him to the same insight and sorrow, to the same confession and acknowledgment, apart from which the reconciliation of sinners to God is self-evidently an impossibility. For to be reconciled to God means at all events that God's mind about sin, which is revealed to us in Christ, through Christ becomes our own.³

3. And the same position emerges from the theory of Forsyth, where the penal terminology means fundamentally that Christ made an actual submission to holiness in judgment. This can be summarized under two general headings: first, that Christ in His obedience made a perfect confession

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 272-273.

²Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 90.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 259-260. Earlier he had written, "they submit in Him to the divine sentence upon sin, and at bottom become right with God", "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", p. 613.

of holiness for us; and second, that by reason of His perfect confession Christ was made sin for us, i.e., He bore our sins. The first of these is given expression in three ways, the first two of which concern us here, but the last -- that Christ's obedience makes ours possible -- will be dealt with later. (a) Forsyth says that Christ makes a perfect confession of holiness by bearing our curse; i.e., He sanctifies the judgment by the way it is borne. It was a racial confession by the holy and not a personal confession by the guilty; it was a confession of holiness not of sin. This means that Christ entered voluntarily into the race's judgment in such a way as to declare it just and to satisfy its requirements. The judgment "fell where it was perfectly understood, praised, and had the sanctifying effect of giving holiness at last its own."¹ These ideas are set forward in the following,

The holy love of God yearning over souls could not deal with individual sinners, there was a cloud between God and the race, till the holiness was owned and perfectly praised by its racial confession, until holiness was confessed much more than sin, until on man's side there was not only confession of sin but confession of holiness from sin's side amid the experience of judgment on the scale of the race, until the confessing race was thus put in right relation to God's holiness. Then judgment had done its perfect work. The race's sin was covered and atoned by it; i.e., by the God who bore it ... God there, in a racial holiness amid racial curse, sets up a racial salvation, which our souls enter upon by faith²

(b) This took place in the moral act of voluntarily offering Himself upon the Cross; His entire life was a progress of obedience to the Father's will from perfection to perfection culminating finally in the act of self-sacrifice,

He was perfectly obedient from the first, but he learned obedience by the things He suffered ... He saw on the paschal night a cross He did not see in the rapture of His baptism, and He accepted then a work which He did not at first realise in its full form and fear. He was not more perfect in His obedience at the end than at the beginning; but it was a more perfect perfection that He obeyed.³

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 83.

²Ibid., p. 133. cf. The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 36, 73-74; and, Religion In Recent Art, p. 208.

³Forsyth, Christian Perfection, p. 123.

In Him, says Forsyth, "God honoured within man the law of His own changeless holiness; He condemned sin in the flesh;"¹ and, "the original thing in Jesus was His peculiar way of honouring the law, and not His discarding of it. The claim of God's holy will was never ended till it was met."²

Of the second point noted above, Forsyth declares that Christ was made sin for us in two senses: (a) our conscience can rest in the Atonement only if God is the Reconciler; if He is the One who bears the judgment in Himself, thus, "God was in man expiating sin to His own holiness."³ In Christ's submission in holiness to judgment under the unspeakable load of our guilt our sins were judged in Him and this act is creative of the new conscience and ethic of the race, he says,

Christ not only exercises the judgment of God on us; He absorbs it, so that we are judged not only by Him but in Him. And so in Him we are judged unto salvation.⁴

And (b) Christ bears our sin sympathetically. That is, He did not know the meaning of a guilty conscience, rather, He identified Himself with our guilt on the one hand and God's judgment of it on the other,

In being "made sin", treated as sin (though not as a sinner), Christ experienced sin as God does, while he experienced its effects as man does.⁵

The two principle ideas which the discussion of this section leads us to is that Christ has voluntarily and fully submitted to a racial or solidary judgment, and that His obedience was racial -- it was universal in character. And, these two ideas may be tied together with the discussion of this entire chapter by the concept which underlies it, namely, that the greater the love the greater its capacity to bear the evil and the punish-

¹Forsyth, "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 141.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 156-157. cf. The Work Of Christ, p. 126, 128, 133.

³Forsyth, "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 141.

⁴Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 312. cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 29, 36.

⁵Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 101. cf. Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 364; The Work Of Christ, p. 164.

ment of sin in order to redeem.

The free obedience of the Son -- His characteristic acceptance of the Father's sovereignty -- was the glory of the Son incarnate, said Dale.¹ When writing of this obedience Denney stressed its final, universal character,

what is meant ... is that Christ's offering of Himself without spot to God had an absolute or ideal character; it was something beyond which nothing could be, or could be conceived to be, as a response to God's mind and requirements in relation to sin. It was the final response, a spiritual response, to the divine necessities of the situation²

But it is Forsyth who lays particular stress on these aspects of the doctrine. The judgment Christ bore, he says, "was solidary judgment".³ It was neither the sufferings nor the sorrow of Christ on the Cross that saves us, but Christ's positive, complete and humble obedience in that death, he declares.⁴ We ought to discard the notion of equivalent penalty in favour of "Christ's obedient sanctity as the satisfying thing before God", he wrote.⁵ We are thus thrown back upon the key concept of revelatory and redeeming acts of God. God reveals His displeasure and disowning of sin in a moral act of judgment and His redeeming purpose and love in a moral act of redemption which is the Cross. In each case it is the revelation of an absolute moral personality who is the supreme moral reality of the universe acting to fashion a community of free creatures after the image of His own holiness and freedom. Forsyth epitomizes the work of Christ in the following,

Christ's person has its reality in its active relation to other persons -- God or men. We must find the key to it in something Christ did with His entirety, and did in relation to that holiness of God which means so much more than all Humanity is worth. The key to Christ's person is in His work.⁶

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 160. cf. Preface, p. lvii-lxii.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 228.

³Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 114.

⁴Forsyth, "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 142. cf. The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 68.

⁵Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 294. cf. The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 70; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 90ff; The Work Of Christ, p. 125-126.

⁶Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 352.

Finally, Christ's obedience to the Father's will and submission to judgment is the fruit of the divine love which bears sin and forgives it. The Atonement signifies, said Dale, the fundamental truth that Christ achieves redemption not primarily by revealing God's love to us -- though this is assuredly true -- but He reveals God's love to us by the redemption which He achieves.¹ Denney puts the same idea by saying that love, which is the fundamental reality of the world, provides expiation for sin at infinite cost; grace and satisfaction stand together.² Similarly, Forsyth declares that the death of Christ completes by an eternal act the love of God which is embodied in Him. Christ's presence in the race was not merely the evidence of a divine love, he says, "sensitive yet unpierced at the centre by sin", rather, the Cross was "the deed of love stung to the core, stung to act for its life, to act once for all and make an end."³ The essential truth of Christianity, therefore, is that to forgive sin God must bear it. The Atonement is the divine act in which God has borne the penalty of sin Himself in Christ and the dispersed consequences of evil and sin in the world and the race as well, yet remaining uncorrupted and with His love for us the more intense because it bears in it salve for our wounds, peace for our consciences, and hope of life in fellowship with Him. We note that when speaking of the submission of Christ to the Messianic vocation of suffering in bearing sin as the key to Jesus' life Dr. Hodgson also said,

Our Lord's acceptance of this, patent throughout His ministry from His temptation onwards, is most clearly shown in the account of His teaching about His messiahship which follows St. Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. By this time it has become clear that the official leaders of God's chosen people are incapable of recognising in Him God's promised messiah ... He begins to take them into His confidence, to explain the kind of fulfillment of His messianic vocation to which He must look forward. This is too much for St. Peter ... But the law that sin produces pain is not to be evaded. The world's evil is not to be cured by any word or deed which will interfere with its operation.⁴

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 218.

²Denney, "The Epistle To The Romans", p. 622; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 99-100.

³Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 360; note p. 361-5.

⁴Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 74-75.

VI

The central feature of Christ's actual submission to the divine holiness in judgment was the death He died as the necessary element in order to achieve, finally, atonement. We are led into this topic conveniently by Dale's insistence that apart from His death, Christ's relation to the Father would not truly represent our own; otherwise, any relation we sustain to God through Him would be an incredible fiction. The relation we now sustain to God as sinners is one of death conceived of as a judgment from God and into this Christ entered; for, if we are still to be related to God through Christ, says Dale, it is necessary that in His relation to God be included an expression of the truth of that relation into which we had come through our sin. Christ, he wrote, was forsaken of God on the Cross, and,

by the Death which followed, He made our real relation to God His own, while retaining -- and, in the very act of submitting to the penalty of sin, revealing in the highest form -- the absolute perfection of His moral life and the steadfastness of His eternal union with the Father.¹

In His death the truth of His relation expressed the truth of ours, and, as we shall see, this is the ground on which we recover our original relation to the Father.

However, Dale is cautious about using the term "necessary" of Christ's death. Earlier he had written that it seems necessary that He should pass through an experience like that of the Garden and the Cross that by His own spontaneous submission He might render ours possible;² but he is careful to qualify this in The Atonement by refusing to ground the necessity of Christ's death in an a priori argument. The necessity emerges, he says, from our inability to conceive of redemption being accomplished in any other way.³

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 425.

²Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 77.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 424. cf. p. 77-78.

Denney took a broader approach, declaring that the death of Christ was both inevitable and indispensable; there was both the outward constraint as the hostile forces gathered their power to crush His goodness mercilessly, and the inward compulsion of accepting that death as the crown of the redeeming work He must do.¹ These two ideas, he says, are not incompatible; and it is clear that Forsyth adopts the same viewpoint. It is as true that the Cross was necessary from the divine standpoint to judge sin, as it is that the events leading up to it were the inevitable reaction of sinful men to the holy character of Jesus. He says, of the incident when Christ encountered the Syrophenecian woman,

Already He had seen death to be inevitable from without, from the temper of His foes. He could not escape it. Now it is carried home to Him, how necessary it was from within, from His Father. He must not escape it. His work required it. It was God's will.²

But what is important about death in general for the race and the death of Christ in particular for Denney and Forsyth, as well as for Dale, is its penal issue; the fact that sin and death are related in the divine economy. It is clear that in human experience certain paradoxical factors cluster around death such as its absurdity, fearfulness, and appeal. The aim of the ministry, declared Dale at his ordination, is to save men from destruction, and the divine pursuit of men with mercy and judgment together with the lure of spiritual ideals and fear of judgment all contrive to dissuade men from the path that leads to destruction.³ The fear of death compels the indifferent to check -- if but momentarily -- their flight; and challenges men to assume

¹Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 29-31, 61. cf. The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 80-81.

²Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 4. cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 29.

³The Ordination Services Of The Rev. R. W. Dale, p. 30. cf. The Atonement, p. 345.

responsibilities deliberately, to make vows, and to form lofty resolutions.¹ Death makes its fascinating appeal in the wish we harbour for the demise of the present life so that out of its ashes may arise a life with new instincts and diviner impulses in which death is no more.² Denney declares that the problem of death is a moral issue because death is real not only to the mind but to the conscience; for example, this is the importance and meaning of "the wages of sin is death".³ The relation between sin and death is direct in the moral order, he argues,

Sin and death do not belong to unrelated worlds. As far as man is concerned, the two worlds, to use an inadequate figure, intersect; and at one point in the line of their intersection sin and death meet and interpenetrate. In the indivisible experience of man he is conscious that they are parts or aspects of the same thing.⁴

But the paradox of death is drawn most sharply by Forsyth. Through Christ (who is the only man who was ever truly and wholly involved in the meaning of a universal or racial death) man may come to know the grace and victory of death; but for the man of unfaith death continues to hold its terrors because it carries to the conscience the reality of divine judgment,

Everywhere the effect of death is an expression and an agent of God's righteousness reacting against sin; and in Christ's death it reacts to sin's destruction. By God's ordinance the wages of sin is death or the horror of it.⁵

Dale's primary concern in The Atonement was to show that there is a direct connection between the unique death of Christ and the remission of

¹Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 15, 69.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 428.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 146. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 309-310.

⁴Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 64-65. cf. p. 68-69. "The Bible does not draw our distinctions. It does not speak about physical death at all. It knows that for man death is not an event only, but an experience, and that it depends on the man who dies what kind of experience it shall be," The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 211. cf. p. 276. Note also The Death Of Christ, p. 128-129; and, Studies In Theology, p. 97-98.

⁵Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 141. cf. The Justification Of God, p. 215; and, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 30, 34, 56.

sins -- this is what he designated the fact of the Atonement;¹ and throughout he strove to show that this was true in the mind of Christ, the Apostles, and that logically this connection alone could make the death of Christ meaningful. Of the evidence which he adduces from the life of our Lord he says,

whatever may be effected for the restoration of mankind to God by His Incarnation, by the fulfillment in Him of the divine ideal of human perfection, by the revelation in His life and character, in His miracles and teaching, of the divine holiness and love, the remission of sins is rendered possible by His Death.²

It is in the act of Christ as the eternal Son of God who, "laid aside His eternal glory, assumed our nature, was forsaken of God, died on the cross" that the sins of men are remitted.³ Clearly, Christ died our death, he says.⁴ The consequences of our sins to which He submitted were "Death, and, what was more terrible than physical Death, the loss of the consciousness of God's presence."⁵

Christ's obedience, said Denney, would be insufficient for our salvation apart from His death;⁶ and when we know that in fact Christ died for our sins we know everything. This is the meaning of Christ's being made sin for us,

What is it then that this 'making sin' covers? What are we to understand by it? It means precisely ... that Christ died for us, died that death of ours which is the wages of sin. In His death, all sinless as He was, God's condemnation of our sin came upon Him; a divine sentence was executed upon the sin of the world. It is all-important to observe that it was God who made Christ sin.⁷

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 3, 360-361.

²Ibid., p. 78.

³Ibid., p. 392.

⁴Ibid., p. 425.

⁵Dale, Preface, p. lx.

⁶Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 232-233.

⁷Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 112. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 148-149; "Curse", Op. Cit., p. 535; "The Epistle To The Romans", Op. Cit., p. 613; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 63 ff; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 195.

It was necessary, wrote Forsyth, for Christ to die in order to really come near to mankind. Christ "tasted the death of the universal soul -- death eternal. It was the horror of the holy when He 'became sin'."¹ The essence of this death was the world of sin and its meanness in which He alone as the one who alone was truly alive must stand. He only could experience that death in its full terror and meanness, he said,

As it was universal, He was involved in it -- involved, though not diseased, not captured. His life as man was a real life, and He was bound to feel the last reality of man's deadness. And He alone could feel it. They were too dead in sin. Alone He fulfilled the condition of feeling a mortal death utterly universal, and therefore dreary, cold, loathsome, to such a soul as His.²

And what is borne in upon us in this death again is the submission of Christ in willing obedience. Here was an act of God -- God dying for men³ -- so that in Himself He might bear the evil and judgment of our sin and redeem us into His fellowship. It is God in Christ who reconciles, Forsyth insists,

The physical death only showed forth the spiritual. It was there that the value lay. And a spiritual death, in absolute obedience, amid an atmosphere of unfaith, when it is really tasted and not merely sipped, means fog and gloom sour and chill, formless fears and failing force -- no visions, no raptures, no triumphs, no flush of energy, no heroic glow. That was the blood of Christ ... It was an act of God, and not merely of God's agent.³

Some reference has already been made to the significance attached by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth to certain important traditional terms and images which express the ideas attached to the doctrine of the Atonement. But before concluding this section it is incumbent upon us to draw attention to several more which bear particularly upon this and the preceding section where our attention has been drawn by these theologians to the

¹Forsyth, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 17. cf. p. 25-28.

²Ibid., p. 30-31.

³Forsyth, The Taste Of Death And The Life Of Grace, p. 42, 47. cf. The Work Of Christ, p. 25.

submission of Christ in holiness to judgment and death for us. Dale's view on the role of such New Testament and other metaphors and images appears to underlie the position of Denney and Forsyth also. It will be recalled that for him these representations do not comprise a theory, but are illustrative of certain truths of which every theory must take account. Thus Dale is convinced that they cannot be combined to form a single conception, which is the problem that confronts the theologian in dealing with the Atonement,

These illustrations of the nature and effect of the Death of Christ are illustrations, and nothing more. They are analogous to the transcendent fact only at single points. The fact is absolutely unique. The problem before us is to form some conception of the Death of Christ which shall naturally account for all these various representations of it!¹

Dale insists, though, that these illustrations are of infinite practical value as the "authoritative tests of the accuracy of a theory"² and that all forms under which the Atonement is explained must take serious account of them. Denney also believes that in approaching the doctrine a theory which is logical, moral, and consistent with the facts at hand is what we ought to strive after.³ Forsyth's demand for the reduction of belief -- i.e., the reduction of the vast bulk of the creeds -- but not its attenuation -- illustrates his attitude. We are, he said, to interpret the Cross in the light of God's holiness and man's sin and its power as an act of God to redeem the world and man from evil and sin; it must be viewed teleologically, i.e., by its effects, prospects, and end rather than by its antecedents; and, it must be viewed ethically, i.e., it is the provision of forgiveness at great cost. In other words, for all three, the aim of the

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 358.

²Ibid., p. 359.

³It will be recalled, for example, that such a term as propitiation, he said, does not draw its meaning from the peculiarities of Jewish or pagan history "but in the human conscience which is common to both. If we have not the key to it in ourselves, no learning will put it in our hearts", The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 155-156.

theologian is to show in what sense the Cross makes a difference to God and man in the moral order of things so that forgiveness is granted, the world delivered from the power of evil, and man reconciled to God. The data we draw on must contribute to the scheme of the whole. We are not therefore to be bound by the rigidity of former methods; it is the truth behind the letter, behind the illustration, metaphor, or image that we seek so as to construct a coherent view of the whole.

Dale devotes scant attention to the terms representative and satisfaction and avoids the term substitute altogether. Christ's death was representative, he says, in the sense in which the older theologians described Him as the Federal head of the race. What the technical theological terminology often concealed, he declares, is the key idea that Christ "is in very truth, by the original law of the universe, the Representative of mankind";¹ i.e., the root of the race, as we have shown. And his comment on the term satisfaction is even more cryptic. Christ's death was a satisfaction to the righteousness of God "in whatever sense the punishment of the guilty can be spoken of as a Satisfaction to the righteousness of God."² Our discussion of Dale's theory thus far has served to show what that sense is.

In his historical survey of the doctrine of the Atonement³ Denney goes to some length to discuss the term satisfaction showing its probable origin in early penitential systems of the Church and the varying shades of meaning and problems of ambiguity that have become attached to it since. What lies at the heart of the term for the Christian, he says, is his conviction that both grace and satisfaction are constituent elements of redemption. The difficulty arises when one attempts to develop a completely logical statement of the doctrine. What satisfaction gives utterance to is not a system of

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 433.

²Ibid., p. 433.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, Ch. II.

arithmetical categories but the conviction that forgiveness is not cheap -- it is costly and tragic, he says. He declares that in so far as the satisfaction theory stressed the judicial, the abstract and forensic, it became artificial and lost contact with the personal and moral elements which make up life, and must therefore be criticized. But in so far as it expresses the sinner's inner conviction that he stands in immeasurable debt to Christ who has for him satisfied in love all the demands of a holy God -- because He is Himself God -- and thereby has brought him into a living relationship with the Father, it gives utterance to an unassailable truth. Denney was keenly aware of the possibility of a disbalance in theology, especially of the Atonement, between the material and spiritual elements. The purely spiritual, he said, tends to obliterate the distinction between the Redeemer and the redeemed; whereas, the purely material easily leads to artificiality and antinomianism. Both must be avoided. Reconciliation operates in the sphere of love and morality and the reconciled life exercises reconciling love and power.¹

Thus Denney maintains that no matter how difficult the term substitute is to define and employ correctly in relation to the work of Christ, the truth conveyed by it has an essential role to play in unfolding the significance of the Cross.² That such expressions as taking our place, dying for our sins, entering into the responsibilities of our sins, and doing for the race what it could not do for itself, yield the idea of substitution is manifest. Yet the possibility of ambiguity is apparent for it can be

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 280-281.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 176. He says, "He is righteous, for in the death of Christ His law is honoured by the Son who takes the sin of the world to Himself as all that it is to God; and He can accept as righteous those who believe in Jesus, for in so believing sin becomes to them what it is to Him. I do not know any word which conveys the truth of this if "vicarious" or "substitutionary" does not, nor do I know any interpretation of Christ's death which enables us to regard it as a demonstration of love to sinners, if this vicarious or substitutionary character is denied".

construed as suggesting transference of merit or demerit, i.e., the sin of the world to Christ and the merit of Christ to the world as if the relations between God and man can be explained by categories no higher than those of book-keeping. Denney writes,

It is surely not necessary at this time of day to disclaim any interpretation of personal relations which makes use only of sub-personal categories. Merit and demerit cannot be mechanically transferred like sums in an account. The credit, so to speak, of one person in the moral sphere cannot become that of another, apart from moral conditions.¹

The alternative to substitute is representative but the objections which can be marshalled against it are as formidable as those against substitute, says Denney. The term can suggest that men are not as helpless because of sin as substitute implies, but that they can put forward Christ in their own name. It is a perversion of the truth, declares Denney, if we say that salvation is an act not that Christ does for the race but which the race does in Christ. We did not produce and put Him forward; He is, rather, God manifest in the flesh facing our responsibilities and bearing our burdens as only God could do. As left with a choice we are to regard substitute as the more fundamental of the two terms, he suggests, and when we have seen Him first as our substitute then we may truly speak of Him as our representative also,

In proportion as we see and feel that out of pure love He stands in our place -- our substitute -- bearing our burden -- in that same proportion are we drawn into the relation to Him that makes Him our representative.²

Forsyth argued that a theology which takes stock of the moral order cannot do without the idea of satisfaction. But satisfaction, he says, flows from, it does not procure, grace; and, it cannot mean equivalence but an adequate dealing with sin under the conditions of holiness and

¹Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 95.

²Ibid., p. 100-101. cf. p. 97-99.

judgment,

the expiatory idea of Christianity which is concerned with the notion of satisfaction, is quite necessary to do justice to the conception of God as love, and to the closeness of His identification with us ... I have sought to construe the satisfaction to a holy God as consisting only in a counterpart and equal holiness rendered under the conditions of sin and judgment.¹

He too is careful to guard against the ambiguities of which the terms substitute and representative are capable; in particular drawing attention to the problem of the auto-soteric implications of the latter. The term substitute corrects this notion, he says.² However, without rejecting substitute as an important term, Forsyth appears to prefer the term representative in his later books because it stresses the solidary reparation achieved by Christ,

Whatever we mean, therefore, by substitution, it is something more than merely vicarious ... It is representative ... freely identifying Himself with man. It is a matter not so much of substitutionary expiation ... but of solidary confession and praise from amid the judgment fires, where the Son of God walks with the creative sympathy of the holy among the sinful sons of men.³

It is clear, therefore, that Dale, Denney, and Forsyth sought a comprehensive theory of the Atonement expressed in logical, moral, personal, and teleological terms which would give expression to the whole range of Christian experience as that experience witnesses to the transcendent fact that God was in Christ reconciling the whole world to Himself. The viewpoint must take into account the total relations between God, the world,

¹Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 368. cf. p. 361-362.

²Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 83. On both he says, "atonement is substitutionary, else it is none. Let us not denounce or renounce such words, but interpret them ... We may replace the word substitution by representation or identification, but the thing remains. Christ not only represents God to man but man to God ... Representation apart from substitution implies a foregone consent and election by the represented, which is not Christ's relation to humanity at all". cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 44.

³Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 225-226. On p. 182 he wrote, "The same act as put God's forgiveness on a moral foundation also revolutionized Humanity. Hence we are not disposed to speak of substitution so much as of representation."

and men, the problem of evil and sin, and the divine intention of bringing to perfection His creation and a community of free persons in fellowship with Himself through an act that redeems by frustrating and absorbing sin and evil, and which enhances goodness and freedom. In relation to the large bulk of their writings, the relative paucity of material on such terms as definitive of the structure of the theories of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, shows that they looked beyond these to the broad implications of the Atonement yet taking into account such terms as illustrative of the truth of the doctrine at specific points. When discussing the early years of the history of Christianity, Dr. Hodgson reminds us that the first Christians were Jews who had learned to think of sin as the hard core of the problem of evil and whose sacrificial worship expressed their need of being set free from it. It was therefore natural that their construction of the doctrine should be set forward in the language of Jewish sacrificial worship, but, this in no way limits their successors in their own attempts to discover the wider ranges of meaning and relevance of the Atonement to the world and mankind as the eternal act of God though as building on the foundation they laid,

The context in which their need has been met was the context in which that need had been felt. However much more may have been involved in the fact that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself", it meant for them that He was the Lamb of God whose sacrifice on their behalf had brought whatever was needed in the way of ransom, redemption, expiation, propitiation and cleansing. It could be left to later ages to see that He could not have been and done what they believed Him to have been and done if He had not in reality both been and done more.¹

¹Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine Of The Atonement, p. 140.

VII

It is now our task to show how for Dale, Denney, and Forsyth Christ's act of submission to judgment and death enables us to respond, or involves our real response to God and hence our reconciliation; and the course of the argument thus far, particularly in the light of the preliminary part of this chapter where the relation of Christ to the race was discussed, has anticipated what position these theologians will take. It is that the totality of Christ's life and His redeeming act are legitimately available to us as the ideal and energy of our own response through the interpenetration of His life with the life of the race, and hence, our lives. In the power of His acceptance of and submission to the will of God perfectly we submit and accept that will for ourselves by the law which constitutes His life the spring of our own. Christ has made a perfect confession of or submission to holiness in the midst of judgment, and His becomes ours not simply by a formal imputation but actually. Thus, both the idea of the moral influence of His example and the idea of the moral interpenetration of His life with ours are involved. How can one alienate from a morally perfect act its beneficent moral influence?

We are created for dependence -- we are necessary to each other -- and it is on this fundamental principle of interdependence reflected in the moral community in which God and man share their lives, said Dale, that the moral order of the world is erected.¹ Thus personality is enabled to achieve its true end only in relation to other personalities which provide for it the social, spiritual, and moral elements necessary for its growth and development. And it is into the ideal relations which have eternally existed between the persons of the Trinity and now made known to us in the life of the incarnate Son that we are to be brought in Him. This means that we are to be won into a real, personal relation with God, sharing those

¹Dale, Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 67-68. cf. Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 193-195.

relations which are the prerogatives of the holy Son. It is noteworthy that Dale, whose work on the Atonement is generally regarded to be austere and impersonal on the question of human response not only in comparison with other works in general but also in comparison with Denney and Forsyth, in fact has as much to say as either of the other two -- if not more -- and more than most commentators suspect, about the primary principle of interdependence on which any theory of the relation of Christ's work to the race must be erected. He declared from the early days of his career that the response of man to God's work in Christ rested upon no arbitrary principle (such as the doctrine of divine decrees implied) but arises out of those relations of dependence which now exist between mankind and Christ.¹ We were created to share Christ's relation to the Father as sons; to be one with Him,

It is the life of the Son which God has made the inheritance of our race; and we ourselves know that this life reaches its complete union with the Father, and its perfect blessedness through the communion and grace of the Divine Spirit. Our relations to God as His sons are grounded on the eternal relations of the Son to the Father, and the life of the Son and the communion of the Holy Ghost have been made ours that we may realize our sonship.²

It will be recalled that the second of the two laws that Dale derived from the parable of the vine and branches declares that our own relation to the Father is determined by the relation of Christ to the Father which means that it is real not formal,

By no fictitious imputation or technical transfer, but by virtue of a real union between the life of Christ and our own life, His relation to the Father becomes ours. It is ours with the same qualifications with which His life is ours. In Him both the life and the relation exist in transcendent form.³

The possibility and reality of this union was clear to the disciples of

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 27.

²Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 349. cf. p. 307 where he said that the glory of the Father which we share in Christ is "eternal participation in the life of the Father"; and, The Atonement, p. 247-248.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 420. cf. The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 77.

our Lord, wrote Denney, for in seeing Jesus they "felt that nothing ever came between Him and God, and that nothing need ever come between Him and themselves. He was as divine as the Father and as human as they."¹ Christ determines all the relations existing between God and man, he said.² In Christ there is revealed, declared Forsyth, the person in all persons, the God of all souls; that is, Him from whom all other persons have their existence and through whom alone they stand related to God.³

But, if on the one hand the eternal relation of the Son to the Father is the ground and character of the relation we were to sustain to God, on the other hand the original relation Christ sustains to the race, which had been marred by sin, and which is now declared in the Incarnation, exhibits for us both the actual ground in an historical context of the perfect human life in fellowship with God and the possibility of its achievement for the race through the Cross where that life is laid down for our redemption. Christ has come into the interdependence we share in the race in a unique and intimate relationship; but in coming to us and amongst us His act signifies not only His self-humbling but also the declaration to us that He is the one from whom we draw our life. He is Creator, Sustainer, Provider; He is the Logos, the Eternal Word that lies at the root of every man's life; and, this has been His role from eternity. Therefore, apart from Him we are nothing; He is the truly personal one who is taking us up into Himself and creating us to be the persons of His will and purpose; and, when sin threatened to destroy us He resolved to redeem us in a way consistent both with His role as the Eternal Word, and our true development in freedom. That Christ is the original root of the race in the theology of Dale, Denney,

¹Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 53

²Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 403, 408; The Death Of Christ, p. 199.

³Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 365.

and Forsyth we have already shown;¹ but it is needful to reinforce, briefly, the argument put forward by these men that the Incarnation declares the end of redemption -- a glorified race. There exists a unique relation between Christ and the race, says Dale, in virtue of which our relation to God is involved in it as the original relation of Christ to the race so that our life in Him would have been a perpetual ascent towards His supreme holiness;² but now the Atonement has,

rendered possible the retention or recovery of our original and ideal relation to God through Christ which sin had dissolved, and the loss of which was the supreme penalty of transgression.³

What man's nature truly is, wrote Denney, is revealed in Jesus Christ; in Him "we see a life which is at one with God".⁴ "The moral effect of the Cross on man is due", wrote Forsyth, "to a nature in man continuous with the moral nature of God".⁵ Christ sums up in Himself all that God is and all that mankind ought to be, he says,

Unless the Saviour be commensurate with mankind it is but a partial relief. But if he be commensurate with man he is other than the greatest man. And if he be not of the deepest in very God it is no redemption. It may help man, or improve, but it does not regenerate and re-create.⁶

With regard to the union with God in Christ which is posited by these men, it is important to observe that this means a personal union in which man's personality, freedom, and individuality are retained and heightened. They reject the notion of absorption, or union into the divine in such a manner as to destroy the meaning of individual life or its existence. God in creation and redemption aims at a community of free persons. In the

¹Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 147; 151-153. Denney wrote, "all human personality is rooted ... in the Logos, and the Logos made flesh could be the personal center, not of a life alien to man, but of a life truly and purely human", Studies In Theology, p. 68.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 420-421; cf. Christian Doctrine, p. 258.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 431.

⁴Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 9. cf. p. 10, 249; and, Studies In Theology, p. 79.

⁵Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 78.

⁶Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 35.

Christian philosophy of human nature, maintained Dale, "the moral freedom of man and the moral freedom of God are resolutely and consistently vindicated."¹ And Forsyth also insists that the movement in atonement is between two persons; it operates within the sphere of personal relations.²

An interesting point made by Dale on the subject of interdependence in an early address needs to be brought forward before we pass on, and this can be done best by quoting his words. The principle of interdependence, he said, which is so variously illustrated in the general structure of the moral system of this world, assumes its sublimest form in the Atonement where new relations between heaven and earth were established. As vicariousness is the central principle of the plan of redemption, we need not wonder, he said, "that in order to train us for comprehending our dependence on Christ, and to educate those affections which should centre in Him, and in order, too, to secure a living unity in the moral government of mankind, God should have given this law of interdependence a mighty influence in every province of man's history".³ The idea of this principle comprising an important divine educative tool to prepare the race for faith in Christ when He appeared amongst it is an attractive and important concept. There here re-appears the ancient philosophical problem of the one and the many but within a Christian context. We are made for each other; our lives are inextricably meshed together. And, it is the divine purpose that this should be so, for only within the framework of societal relations do our personalities achieve their end. This is equally true of the spiritual realm because the

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 417. cf. The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 86; The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 54. cf. Denney, Factors Of Faith In Immortality, p. 111.

²Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 322, 334-335.

³Dale, The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 25-26. cf. The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 101-104; and, A Manual Of Congregational Principles, p. 22-25.

natural is but the stage on which the divine plan to bring into existence a community of free persons who voluntarily share His fellowship, aims, and service takes place. How appropriate it is, therefore, that within the context of personal relations there are established factors and principles which make up this system of mutual interdependence, which ought to prepare men to see that only in others, and finally in Another, do their lives achieve their full purpose.

From the foregoing we observe that three interlocking ideas are advanced by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth on the way Christ in His life and death is related to the race. The relationship must be personal, moral, and teleological. It is in the realm of personal relations as constituted by the moral quality of God's own nature, and as advancing toward the divine ideal for the race in Christ that we find Christ to be for us all we need. And this may be expressed along the lines of three general ideas, namely, that Christ's perfect life is a life of response which becomes ours through His redeeming work in virtue of the moral influence of that life upon us and the moral interpenetration of His life with ours; second, that Christ has made racial reparation for our sins in which we share and this sin-bearing love, as we have seen, makes its own appeal to us; and third, Christ's universal obedience, His mind regarding sin and submission to judgment create in us a similar response.

1. The key role that Christ fills for the race for Dale is His moral excellence and supremacy as Prince and Saviour to whom mankind owes its allegiance and faith. What human response to God in Christ means therefore for Dale, as well as for Denney and Forsyth, is that the moral perfection of what Christ is becomes ours through a personal, vital union with Him. Dale expresses this as follows,

By Faith a man's life is rooted in the life of Christ, and is voluntarily submitted to the control of Christ's authority; hence Faith is the guarantee that ultimately a perfect personal righteousness will be achieved.¹

He is, wrote Denney, the absolutely unique and universal person; for example, both to St. Peter and to St. Paul "the absolute religious significance of Jesus, in all the relations of God and man is the specific quality of the new faith as it appears in both".² It is by the grace of God incarnate in Jesus Christ that the Christian becomes what he is, Denney had written earlier, and apart from Christ he would have no existence; "God is good", he said, "Christ alone is the Pattern and Inspiration of the Christian character".³ This uniqueness, or exclusiveness of Christ is His holiness, Forsyth declares,

The prerogative of Christ is that He is alone universal among men. He is exclusively universal ... Indeed, you cannot have universality without exclusiveness.⁴

It is this holiness, this exclusiveness, to which the Atonement is addressed and which gets effect in it; and, holiness is the medium, i.e., the moral medium, through Christ's perfect humanity by which not only evil is destroyed and God satisfied, but man also is sanctified.⁵

What Christ has achieved in His perfection is to save human nature. Christ in His resurrection life, is the hope of what we shall some day become, said Dale, "we are made so completely one with Christ that the power of His life is active in our life, as the power of the life of the vine is active in all its branches".⁶ The importance of Christ's sinless life for us in this connection, declares Denney, is that we contemplate it as a moral

¹Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 144. cf. p. 62, 129.

²Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 23.

³Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 16.

⁴Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 206.

⁵Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 312; The Work Of Christ, p. 201.

⁶Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 148. cf. Christ And The Future Life, p. 77.

achievement; "in other words, He saved human nature in His own person, in order that it might subsequently be saved in the persons of all others".¹

We thus find our response to God in the power and perfection of His life through our union with Him who is the root of our life and the ground of our personality, both as individuals and as a race. Forsyth employs the unusual term "close"² to describe what Christ is in the divine purpose for the race and how in this role He becomes assimilated by the race,

A gracious close like Christ is one that takes effect in human response and communion, and not in mere contribution. His value is not in himself all unknown, but in himself interpreted and assimilated by the race in which he rises. The fact Christ, however complete materially, is not complete formally, or in effect, till he is understood and answered, till he is explained and realised in a Church ... The great close, therefore, ends in bearing witness of itself, and coming to its own in man's soul.³

By this Forsyth means that Christ is materially the finality of revelation but not formally because the material revelation and consummation of Christ is not complete without a formal consummation through interpretation and assimilation. A lesson, he says, is not taught till it is learned. Christ's victory was real but it had to become actual; that is, "the great close in Christ had itself to be closed, or at least clinched, in a close of its own",⁴ and this takes place when men are united to Him through that

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 244-245.

²For Forsyth a "close" is an end in itself (e.g. personality); it is a stage, a level, a point of achievement in the evolutionary process, or in the realization of the purpose of God for the world in creation or redemption. cf. The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 146.

³Ibid., p. 150. cf. p. 322-352.

⁴Ibid., p. 149. In his essay "Christ And The Christian Principle" Forsyth said, "And Christ makes real for those who enter communion with Him what without Him were a mere possibility, a mere bias to God. His is that which in them is only destiny. He is the gracious destiny of all ... God truly was in Humanity before Christ was born, but as a presence and power in contact, and not in communion; by His Spirit, but not, as He is in His Church, by His Holy Spirit", Op. Cit., p. 165.

redeeming work. We are thrown back here upon the relations which the persons of the Trinity share amongst themselves and which comprise the ground not only of the Atonement as an objective work, but of its effectiveness in bringing us within that divine circle of fellowship with God in Christ. In the following quotation Forsyth expounds this,

Only one who incarnated God's holiest will as His son alone did could produce and establish in man for ever the due response to that will -- the response of their whole and holy selves. Holiness alone answers holiness; and only the Holy God could make men holy; it could be done by no emissary of His ... The Father who spoke by his prophets must come to save in the Son and must occupy in the Spirit ... It is all one holy love and grace, in this Eternal threefold action, both within God and upon man. Only in this Trinitarian conception of God can we think of such a salvation as ours.¹

Dale and Denney adopt comparable points of view. The love we confess for God, said Dale, is inspired by the perfect ideal of righteousness and goodness which we find in Him; and He is "the ally, the inspiration, and the strength of righteousness in all His creatures", as we noted.² It is thus in the pursuit of righteousness through the revelation of God in Christ that we discover Christ to be to us all that we need for our true response to God,

For that final access to God through Christ we are prepared by access to God through Christ during our earthly years. This was the experience of apostles, and it has been the experience of Christian men in all later generations. It is by living the life that Christ lived, and by living it in the power of union with Christ, that we find God. It is in the power of His trust that we trust in the Father; in the power of His love that we love the Father; in the power of His obedience that we obey the Father. We approach God in Him.³

The perfection we behold in Christ makes its own appeal to us, wrote

¹Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 327. cf. The Work Of Christ, p. 83-84.

²Dale, Atheism And The House Of Commons, p. 5.

³Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 267; noted also on p. 257. cf. The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 27.

Denney, "It is our life we see in Jesus, but we see it in its truth and as it ought to be, a life in God, wholly at one with Him. This life is its own witness, and there is no human soul to which it does not appeal".¹ It is a part of what He was as well as what He did to win men to Himself. Further on in the same book Denney said,

In spite of all the reductions and all the importunate pressures of sin He lived, as a member of our race, a life in which sin had no place and no power ... But Christ, as the evangelical view sometimes led its adherents to forget, after all, is an example; and it is at least possible that to be insensible to the inspiration of His example is to be outside of His reconciling power.²

It is clear from this, that Denney along with Forsyth and Dale, is anxious that the personality of Christ gets its due along with His act of redemption as part of its power in redeeming men to God. Herein lies the reason for their frequent insistence that when we view Christ's total work we must think of who He was and what He did not in quantitative, but qualitative or personal and moral categories.³ But in the union which they conceive our personalities are heightened in fellowship with God. For example, Forsyth says that in the Church we are brought into a spiritual unity through the "distinctively Christian principle of the interpenetration of persons and their cohesion in a supreme personality -- the principle of the Christian Triune God."⁴ This is what Forsyth calls an organic, not discrete or arithmetical unity.⁵

2. Brief reference is in order here to the solidary reparation Christ has made for the race to the law of God to which we have already alluded.

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 10. Noted also on p. 107.

²Ibid., p. 243, 245-246.

³Ibid., p. 119.

⁴Forsyth, Theology In Church And State, p. 184.

⁵Ibid., p. 155 ff. It will be recalled that Dr. Hodgson has pointed out that early Christian theology forced a revision of the Greek idea of unity in the doctrine of the Trinity; "Looking back we can see that what was going on, unrealized at the time by those who were taking part in the discussions, was a revision of the idea of unity ... it was necessary to put in place of the unipersonal God of the Old Testament and the original Christian theology the tri-personal God who has His being as a unity in and through His tripersonality", For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 38, 40.

By reason of the fact that the race has its root in Christ what the believer discovers in the Cross, says Dale, is that he is "eternally one with another Person -- infinitely august -- who has confessed the sin of the race and died for it". Because of the ideal union of every man with Christ He is the propitiation for the sin of the whole world,

In Christ, not in ourselves, we are to find the ground of the remission of sins. Christ -- the Personal Christ -- who is the root of all the righteousness possible to the race, is the sacrifice for the sin of the race.¹

The whole issue of the relevance of the Atonement to the race, maintains Denney, is that Christ must have had an "original and central relation to the human race"² on the basis of which what He has done takes us up into it. Elsewhere he wrote,

But He is the Holy One of God bearing our sin; that is what He is at the Cross, and that is our point of contact with Him; it is as He died in our place, bearing our burden, that He draws us to Himself and unites our life to His own;³

The character of Christ's work as an act of sin-bearing love carries in it its own appeal to the hearts of men evoking the response of faith. There is nothing, declared Denney that is capable of achieving reconciliation like love bearing the sinner's sin; and, that not evil, sin and judgment but that self-same love is the final reality of the world,

It is not meant that we can anticipate in our sin what the divine way of deliverance will be, but only that there is something in our necessities to which the way of deliverance must appeal and which is therefore prepared to understand and appreciate it ... Reconciliation is achieved when such love is manifested, and when, in spite of guilt, distrust, and fear, it wins the confidence of the sinful.⁴

¹Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 147.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 318.

³Denney, The Primary Marks Of Christianity, p. 90. Contrary to the opinion of Dr. Rashdall (Op. Cit., p. 441) that Denney said the death itself as an isolated fact atoned, Denney says, "To avoid the mistake just referred to, we may speak rather of Jesus in His death than of the death of Jesus. Jesus in His death has the supreme power by which men have been reconciled to God. It is as the crucified that he has been able to create in sinners God's thoughts of sin, to evoke penitence, to inspire faith, to bring men back to the Father ... must do justice to this fact", The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 17.

⁴Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 218.

Forsyth describes this aspect of Christ's work as Christ being the reversionary of the race. It is through His perfect satisfaction of the just claims of the law of God that the claims upon us are met.¹ It is not simply a judgment borne by God for that would have been irrelevant to the race, rather, because it is

borne by God in man, in such a racial, nay cosmic experience as the cross of Christ, it is the creation of a new conscience and of the new ethic of the race. When Christ died, all died.²

3. Finally, the third way in which the life and redeeming act of Christ are relevant to us because of the fundamental and original relation He sustains to our race is that His obedience or submission to the divine judgment is of a universal character and takes ours up into it. There is created in us through Him the same divine mind regarding sin and judgment as He had in life and in the face of death. This is a fundamental outlook in, and seems to dominate the theology of, Dale on this subject from the publication of The Atonement onwards. In The Atonement he made the point that it is an offence to resent the just penalties of the law as well as to transgress it, but that Christ has submitted ideally for us. This supreme act, he says, becomes ours not by a formal imputation, but actually because of the fact that His life is the root of ours,

we find in the Death of Christ the perfect expression and fulfillment of that submission which we know ought to be manifested by ourselves.

Christ's act, therefore,

is the very life and vigour of the moral act in which we in our turn make the same submission ... His submission is, therefore, the ground on which our sins may be forgiven.³

¹Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 406. The Work Of Christ, p. 54-57.

²Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 30.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 423. When recapitulating the argument, Dale said that the Death of Christ is the objective ground on which the sins of men are remitted because it was an act of submission to the righteousness of the divine judgment, and that His submission is the expression of ours, and carries ours with it, p. 430-431.

Later, with the publication of the Preface, Dale took the opportunity to reiterate this, expanding it along personal lines.¹ In coming to God through Christ, he said, we acknowledge ourselves sinful, thus Christ is at once our condemnation and our hope, for in Him we see perfection in stark contrast to our sin. In Him we see that perfect trust in God and obedience which ought to lie in us. Faith leads us to say, he writes, that Christ's thoughts about sin are truer than our own, that though we have never felt truly our own wickedness Christ has, but that we wish to abhor our sin. We confess, too, he says, that we do not submit without resentment and reserve to the divine judgment, but we see in Christ no resentment and perfect submission; and, we desire to have His mind in this also. Further, Christ not only confessed the justice of the divine judgment, He submitted to it actually by dying the death of sin in a supreme act of holiness and love which both vindicates righteousness and reconciles us. We might shrink, he continues, from approaching God when our own thoughts are not perfectly true; but it is enough to plead that Christ's are and that we desire ours to rise to His. And, we are assured that God receives us because Christ gives us His own life so that our thoughts, feelings, temper, and spirit will become like His. Thus, he says,

the moral act of Christ in submitting to those sufferings
... while unique ... involves a similar moral act on the
part of all who have 'access' to God through Him.²

That this approximates the reaction of all true children of the Cross seems clear from the history of those who have made up the company of the redeemed community from the days of the Apostles to the present; it must be accepted not only as factual, but as part of the explanation of the relevance of Christ's work to the race. We are reminded of St. Augustine's words in the opening lines of the Confessions, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our

¹Dale, Preface, p. lvii-lxii.

²Ibid., p. lxii. cf. The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 75-78;
Christian Doctrine, p. 270; The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses,
p. 146-147, 151-153.

hearts are restless till they may have found their rest in Thee".¹

Denney's viewpoint is analogous to that advanced by Dale. We confront, he said, the living Christ with the virtue of His reconciling death in Him; He is the bearer of victory to the beaten race, "the Sovereign Man who overcomes all that has overcome us, and makes us partakers of His triumph."² Christ's work is designed to a certain intent -- to a certain issue -- that is, "it is designed to produce in them through penitence God's mind about sin".³ A few pages further on Denney declares,

If He had not thus seen and felt what sin is to God, if He had not thus acknowledged God's justice in condemning it, we could never have been brought through Him to the same insight and sorrow, to the same confession and acknowledgment, apart from which the reconciliation of sinners to God is self-evidently an impossibility. For to be reconciled to God means at all events that God's mind about sin, which is revealed to us in Christ, through Christ becomes our own.⁴

Forsyth says that Christ's obedience to the holiness of God was on the scale of the race, perfect and universal,

It was complete obedience on a universal scale to the moral requirements of grace, i.e., to a holy grace, and to what the holiness of grace required in a situation of racial sin.⁵

Through Christ's filial obedience we enter to the Father, he declares; Christ presented to God in Himself a perfect racial obedience,

What Christ presented to God for His complete joy and satisfaction was a perfect racial obedience ... It was a racial obedience. God's holiness found itself again in the humbled holiness of Christ's "public person". He presented before God a race created for holiness.⁶

¹St. Augustine, Confessions, Bk. I, Ch. I; London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1950.

²Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 39.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 234.

⁴Ibid., p. 259-260. cf. p. 305; The Epistle To The Romans, p. 613; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 89-90.

⁵Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 97. Here also he declares that when we speak of the blood of Christ we must mean something more than the effort of His whole self; rather, "the exhaustive obedience and surrender of his total self".

⁶Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 128, 130; Missions In State And Church, p. 203.

Christ's relation to man is racial; on the Cross He represented Humanity in its totality.¹ What we are brought to is, says Forsyth, that the supreme issue of Christ's death and of our response in Him is moral; we deal "in the region of personal interaction, in the moral, the religious region alone, the region where grace acts and faith answers".²

It is clear in the light of the foregoing that many of the criticisms of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth fail because they have not taken into account adequately the theological structure on which these men build both sides of the Atonement. Probably the criticisms of Dr. Rashdall against Dale and Denney, and by implication against Forsyth as well, are the most violent. But what is important to note is that for these men the problem of evil and sin is very real, and the problem of the reality of divine judgment must be dealt with in a manner consistent with the holiness and freedom of God and the freedom of man. Further, Dale, Denney, and Forsyth construct their theory upon the doctrine that in Christ we have God incarnate, i.e., God taking upon Himself a genuine human experience. Therefore the work of Christ must be in every sense definitive, and the ground, of all the relations which obtain between God and the race mediated through the moral order in which they both share their lives. If Christ is the root and ground of our life then what He is to us and has done for all converge to the one end of bringing us into the divine fellowship; it is a work of God which has destroyed evil, frustrated sin, enhanced freedom, exalted love, and reorganized the moral order of the world.

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 158. cf. The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 136.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 58. cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 93.

VIII

Throughout the development of the preceding seven sections in which we have attempted to trace the purpose of God in the Cross for the redemption of the world and men from the power of evil and sin, there lurks the problem of the formal relation between the so-called objective and subjective elements of the Atonement which we shall now bring to light and clarify. It is sometimes thought that a truly objective or finished work of Christ in the nature of the case excludes a true human response. What have we to say about this? The answer in the bare statement of it is that far from an objective theory excluding a true human response, it is only in and through a finished work of Christ that a genuine human response can be achieved. The objective Atonement as here postulated in the nature of the case involves a real human response. Or, to put it in terms of the foregoing discussion, not only is the obedience and submission of Christ the root and life of our own submission to God in Him; but the work of Christ contains the form of, it involves the very possibility of, response. It is this involvement of human response in and through the form of Christ's work as well as through the power of Christ's response that Dale has in mind of which Dr. Rashdall is so critical but which he has failed to grasp.¹ Denney points to this same idea when he speaks of Christ's work as having a certain end in view which it is divinely adapted to secure.² And, as well as saying what we noted earlier that the work of the Atonement includes the form of its application because "a lesson is not taught till it is learned", Forsyth declares that as the very judgment Christ bore for us is relevant to our sin by His moral solidarity with us, "so the value of His work to God includes also that value which it has in acting on us through that same solidarity".³ It is this

¹Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 493-496. cf. Dale, The Atonement, p. 430-432; Preface, p. lxii.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 108.

³Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 193.

value of Christ's work to God as inclusive of its value in acting on us that we need to isolate from the writings of these theologians here.

We must bear in mind constantly that the Atonement is a work achieved by God whom we know to be revealed in three persons -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- and, that the key to what man will be through the redeeming purposes of God lies in the relations of the Trinity, in particular, the relation of the Incarnate Son in a perfect human life to the Godhead. His life exhibits for us the true life of man in fellowship with God which is the divine aim for the race in His redeeming work. "Men", wrote Dale, "were created in Christ, the eternal Son of God, the eternal Word of God, and were created to share His eternal relations to the Father; and, "it may be said that the human race and its relations to Christ and to the Father through Him are, in a very true sense, necessary to the fulfillment of the ideal of Christ's own life and of Christ's own relations to the Father".¹ Therefore, the ultimate conception of man must be sought in the doctrine of the Trinity as the most central doctrine of the Christian faith.

In part we have already approached the solution of this problem in section III of this chapter where it was shown that through the moral victory Christ has won, new relations have actually been achieved between God and the world involving a "world-interest" of redemption. In other words, what God has done in Christ means that the race has been actually put into the kingdom, so to speak; we are members of a redeemed world; through Christ sinners are actually right with God. And a way in which this is expressed in the theology of these men, notably that of Dale, is in baptism which, when applied, signifies that the child or adult is a member of this kingdom which Christ has won to the Father. But, this is the larger aspect, the cosmic form, of the problem and its solution which we have set for

¹Dale, "Preliminary Essay", Op. Cit., p. xvii. cf. The Atonement, p. 5-7; Fellowship With Christ, p. 349.

ourselves here. What can we say about the form of an objective atonement being relevant to the race in general and to individual men in particular? Two important ideas emerge. First, that the eternal God in His infinite wisdom, love, and omnipotence provides a work of redemption which is consistent with His creative purpose in man and commensurate with what man is and ought to be, i.e., that it is the aim and prerogative of omnipotence to create freedom by limiting itself. And second, that the objective Atonement which God has achieved for man's redemption, because it is consistent with the divine purpose for man and commensurate with human nature, is able to create or to evoke the response for which it was intended.

1. The purpose of God is to create a community of free persons who are in voluntary fellowship with Himself and His aims, and when this purpose was marred by the intrusion of evil and sin He resolved to redeem man but in a fashion consistent with His original purpose. In other words, the redemption which God provides is tailor-made; it is made-to-measure to fit both the divine purpose and what human nature is if there are to be genuinely free human persons. Christ's work achieves a salvation for us which is suitable, related, or appropriate to what men are as men, thus limiting the divine omnipotence yet vindicating it in human freedom through the character of that work which wins men to free repentance to God, fellowship with Him, and service for Him. It is in this sense, Dale says, that God wills and desires the salvation of the human race; He fashions a work that will win men.¹ The form of the redeeming act of God, he adds, exhibits a love which "anticipates their obedience".² Thus, the only place, declares Dale, for omnipotence in the moral life is in fashioning a redemption which exhibits all the motives and influences that we observe in the Cross and is

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 22.

adapted to the constitution of man and the divine ideal of freedom. In the following quotation Dale sets this forward in the context of discussing the nature of an objective atonement,

But His work would be incomplete, and His resources for the salvation of mankind inadequate, if He were not able to win back the affection of the human heart to God, to break the force of evil habits, to uproot evil passions, and to sustain and strengthen human infirmity ... He has anticipated this second necessity ... Omnipotence has no place in the region of the moral life, but if it had, we should declare that its highest manifestation was in the motives and influences of which the Cross of Christ is the centre and the origin.¹

We have taken note of Denney's statement that the Atonement has in view its end from the beginning. This end -- which is the realization in man of the new life which the work of Christ wins -- he says, is neither an incidental addendum nor casual consequence, but a divine adaptation,

To use words which are useful, though apt to be misunderstood: the work of reconciliation must have justice done to its subjective as well as its objective reference; the doctrine must recognise its ultimate effect in man as well as its value for God.²

Later, Denney declares that the Pauline expression "faith in His blood" is obviously correlative to the propitiation; "it is that which Christ in His character of propitiation appeals for and is designed to evoke in the hearts of sinful men".³ Thus, when men stand before the Cross, there is an immediate appeal made through it as the divine act of sin-bearing love to what they are and may become. In other words, God has designed His redeeming act with a certain end in view, namely, to meet human need and to elicit human response. And the same idea appears in the writings of Forsyth,

In love we were created and endowed with freedom by an act of God wherein he limited his own freedom by the area of ours ... The freedom that limits itself to create freedom is true omnipotence, as the love that can humble itself to save is truly almighty ... So

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 26-27.

²Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 108.

³Ibid., p. 162-163. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 118.

it was with the new Creation. There was more omnipotence (if we can so speak) concentrated in the person of Christ than was spread in all creation. To appear and act as Redeemer, to be born, suffer, and die, was a mightier act of Godhead than lay in all the creation, preservation, and blessing of the world.¹

2. But beyond the Atonement being designed with a view to human response, it actually is creative of it, or, it evokes that response in men. This is clear from the quotations we have just cited from Dale where he declares that this work does appeal to the instincts, desires, and passions of the human soul. Elsewhere Dale wrote that the redemptive purpose of God in Christ had in view this free concurrence of men to a life of blessedness in union with Himself,

But the divine purpose did not suppress human freedom. It could be fulfilled only by the free concurrence of the race with the Divine righteousness and love.²

Jesus came, said Denney, to show and declare God's fatherly love, and, that we in Him are called to be His children through liberty of obedience to His will.³ The one thing in the universe, he declares, which is able to evoke faith is the sin-bearing love of God in Christ.⁴

In the works of Forsyth there occur several striking ways in which this is put. As God, he says, Christ acts creatively in man to forgive and create life, faith, and love; and, that this function stems from Christ's finality or perfection which He achieved once for all in life and death but which He is now also realizing through the Church as the redeemed community.⁵ The act of response is evoked or created by its object,⁶ it is

¹Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 314-315.

²Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 54.

³Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 320.

⁴Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 303. cf. p. 17.

⁵Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 198-199.

⁶Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 204.

"the response evoked by His supreme revelation and gift of Himself to man as Father, Saviour, and King."¹ In the Work Of Christ he had stressed that our response is latent in Christ's which, because of its character, is creative in a continuing way of all human response,

our repentance was latent in that holiness of His which alone could and must create it, as the effect is really part of the cause, -- that part of the cause which is prolonged in a polar unity into the sequential conditions of time.²

He adds that through Christ alone is God able to create the holiness that will please Him,

Christ alone in His sinless perfection can feel all God's holiness in judging sin; and therefore He alone could confess and honour it ... Our repentance and our sanctity are of saving value before God only as produced by the creative holiness of Christ.³

But what proves to be a particularly interesting insight occurs in the early pages of the Work Of Christ where Forsyth points out that most poetic and artistic innovators have to create a taste for their work before it is appreciated, "they had to create the very power of understanding themselves". And this is what Christ has done by His work in the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Church Who creates in men the capacity or ability to respond,

Now in like manner Christ had to make the soul which should respond to Him understand Him. He had to create the very capacity for response. And that is where we are compelled to recognize the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as well as the doctrine of the Saviour. We are always told that faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit ... the death of Christ had not simply to touch like heroism, but it had to redeem us into power of feeling its own worth. Christ had to save us from what we were too far gone to feel.⁴

¹Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 9.

²Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 192.

³Ibid., p. 212-213. cf. p. 206-207. In The Principle Of Authority he said that "the fact, being spiritual in its nature and not merely in its effects, creates its own belief", p. 117. cf. p. 169.

⁴Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 18. cf. p. 15.

IX

Another charge that is made frequently against objective theories is that they tend either to allow antinomianism because of their form or to encourage it because of a tendency to divide justification and sanctification in the life of the Christian. We have now to take up this question to show that for Dale, Denney, and Forsyth any semblance of antinomianism practically, or to allow a loophole for it theologically, was out of the question. They advance the viewpoint that through the Atonement and through the continuing ministry of Christ righteousness is guaranteed in the redeemed. But the point that will be discussed here is the negative aspect of the problem, namely, that because of our union with Christ the death of sin in us is real, i.e., His death is in some sense an event in our lives whereby the power of sin is broken; the positive side of this question that Christ in and amongst us enables us to realize the quality of life which is the divine ideal will occupy our attention in the succeeding section.

It is interesting and important to observe first that the traditional form of the problem in regard to perseverance, or the eternal security of the believer, as it occupied the minds of so many traditional Protestant theologians, attracted the interest of these men but little. In fact, it is difficult to find passages in Denney and Forsyth that treat the problem in any way seriously in comparison to the space it earned in the writings of the earlier theologians, and, it may be added, in the interest of not a few Christians today. It is true that Dale does in a few places suggest the possibility of a final apostacy from Christ;¹ but, by and large all three have little to say about the individual or personal security of the believer and much to say about the moral responsibility of the Christian to live a godly life, to share his life in the community of redeemed sinners, and to employ the powers of that life in the service of the Head of the Church for

¹Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 37-38, 117-123, 127, 261; The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 270.

the spread of the Gospel which, for them, included the total impression the Church could make on the world to frustrate, absorb, and transmute evil, and to maximize good. It will be recalled that this has exercised the mind of Dr. Hodgson not a little. Even today, he says, many branches of the Christian Church apparently take it for granted "that the Christian religion exists to promote the salvation of Christians, that the Church exists for the salvation of its members". What we need to come to, he adds, is the idea that the Church as the earthly body through which the crucified, risen, ascended Lord wills to carry on His work of rescue, that is, not only of individual men and women from their sins, but the whole of God's creation from all forms of evil and sin.¹

What is clear in the writings of these men, is that for the Christian there can be no bifurcation of thought and action: faith and works must always go together. The key to the Epistle Of James, wrote Dale, is "does your faith make any difference to you?"² This means, in words which he wrote elsewhere, that "Christian faith and Christian morals are inseparable".³ Denney acknowledges that often Protestantism in general and "Evangelicalism in particular tended to make an artificial distinction between justification and sanctification,

Protestantism ... has sometimes forgotten that the great matter is not the distinction of justification and sanctification, but their connection, and that justification or reconciliation is a delusion unless the life of the reconciled and justified is inevitably and naturally a holy life.⁴

Similarly, Forsyth advances the same criticism against some of the traditional Protestant views declaring that they "treated the work of Christ in a way

¹ Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 130, 131.

² Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 83. cf. p. 72-77.

³ Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 341.

⁴ Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 297. cf. p. 280-281, 169; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 40-41; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 363; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 314.

far too objective,¹ failing to connect justification and sanctification.

Each of these men regards the doctrine of sanctification to be of prime importance. We must bear in mind constantly, Dale insists, that the divine end for us is our perfection.² He urged that a more practical recognition of the need of righteousness in personal life is necessary,³ and that the clergy ought to take this into consideration in their doctrinal teaching.⁴ It will be recalled that a cardinal principle of Dale's theory of the Atonement is that through redeeming love the power and perfection of Christ's life were to be ours.⁵ Denney and Forsyth, too, wrote that the Christian's life ought to reflect the divine aim to perfect the whole man; also, said Denney, true Christian character is not produced by a negative separationism, but by the outflow of the love of God from the life.⁶

What must take place is that the power of sin in the life of the Christian must be destroyed in principle and in fact, and Dale, Denney, and Forsyth advance this as actual in the Christian's life through the Atonement. Our situation would be hopeless, said Dale, and the Atonement with its provision of forgiveness a mockery unless there is combined with the work of Christ some guarantee of our break with sin and the realization of Christ's ideal in our lives. Christ, he said, not only creates new motives in us, but in virtue of our union with Him His death becomes ours; in us sin may actually be destroyed for He dies our death and we die in Him.⁷ Elsewhere he says that beyond submission to the law of God being necessary to the granting of forgiveness properly, there is needed a guarantee of our future

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 220. cf. The Principle Of Authority, p. 43-44.

²Dale, The Ten Commandments, p. 20. cf. The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 273.

³Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 129-144.

⁴Ibid., p. 97. The Atonement, p. 186-188.

⁵Dale, The Atonement, p. 420, 421.

⁶Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 115-123; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 292, 324; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 256; "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", Op. Cit., p. 575. Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 269, 412.

⁷Dale, Preface, p. lxiv-lxv.

righteousness. Thus, our relations to Christ are so intimate, "that His death is their death and His resurrection their resurrection ... the death of Christ is the death of sin;"¹ and, that "His Death is a great and critical event in our own history."² But it is in The Atonement that this point is made most forcefully as a constituent element of the doctrine. He died our death, says Dale, and we died in Him. This statement of the Apostle Paul is more than a rhetorical appeal because we are able to verify it in our own experience,

The destruction of evil within us is the effect and fulfillment in ourselves of the mystery of Christ's Death, as the development of our positive holiness is the manifestation of the power of His life.³

How does this take place? While acknowledging it to be a mystery, Dale adds that it gives expression to the truth of the paradox of death in the experience of men generally where they often wish for death that out of its ashes a new self with new instincts and diviner impulses may arise. This is how Dale understands the thrust of St. Paul's words, "I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live..." Perhaps, he says, because of the intimate connection which exists between our lives and Christ, the fact that Christ consented in death to lose the consciousness of His Father's presence "rendered it possible for us to sink to that complete renunciation of self which is the condition of the perfect Christian life ... but it is enough to know the fact that in God's idea, and according to the law of the kingdom of heaven, we are crucified with Christ".⁴

Denney wrote that because of Christ's death for our sins, we are

¹Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 80.

²Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 272.

³Dale, The Atonement, p. 427.

⁴Ibid., p. 429.

enabled to die to sin, "a new life involves death to old relations, and such a new life, involving such death, is the aim of Christ's bearing of our sins".¹ It is the immeasurable sense of debt and gratitude to Christ which the true Christian experiences, he adds, that rules out the thought of being saved from the judgment of sin while yet continuing in it,

It is so profound that the whole being of the Christian is changed by it; it is so strong as to extinguish and to create at once; under the impression of it, to use the apostle's words here, the aim of Christ's bearing of our sin is fulfilled in us -- we die to the sins and live to righteousness.²

But Denney refuses to allow such ideas to descend into a mysticism devoid of rational content. He argues that this death, for St. Paul, is in respect of three relations:³ First, it is a death to sin in the sense of discharge and deliverance from it, providing the foundation for the moral guarantee of Christian living through not only the initial destruction of sin but the daily mortification of evil. Second, it is a death to the flesh which means a death to sin in its "constitutional and instinctive character", so that thereby sin has no longer an impregnable seat in human nature. And third, it is a death to the law, i.e., law in general; the Christian life is a life of inspiration not of statutory obedience. Denney epitomizes the significance of this relationship that the believer sustains to Christ as the power of a moral constraint which the Cross exercises upon the whole life enabling it to implement the powers of personality for overcoming evil and achieving the ideal in Christ,

¹Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 100.

²Ibid., p. 101. Denney is commenting on 1 Peter 2:20 ff. cf. p. 140-142. When discussing Romans 6:11 he said, "The death with Christ, the life with Christ are real, yet to be realised. The truth of being a Christian is contained in them, yet the calling of the Christian is to live up to them. We may forget what we should be; we may also (and this is how Paul puts it) forget what we are. We are dead to sin in Christ's death; we are alive to God in Christ's resurrection; let us regard ourselves as such in Christ Jesus. The essence of our faith is a union in Him in which His experience becomes ours. This is the theological reply to antinomianism", "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", Op. Cit., p. 634.

³Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 186-190.

The New Testament has much to say about union with Christ, but I could almost be thankful that it has no such expression as mystical union. The only union it knows is a moral one -- a union due to the moral power of Christ's death, operating morally as a constraining motive on the human will, and begetting in believers the mind of Christ in relation to sin; but this moral union remains the problem and the task, as well as the reality and the truth of the Christian life¹

This same emphasis upon the moral and moral action is the keynote of Forsyth's position on this point. The Cross, he says, draws us into a repentance which involves our dying with Him (as a part of His death) and then it raises us to newness of life in the fellowship of His resurrection.² Forsyth had declared, it will be recalled, that it is the totality of Christ's person and work in the moral medium of holiness whereby three things take place, namely, the destruction of evil, the satisfaction of God, and the sanctification of men.³ The purpose of the Cross, as a final, finished work, he says, is to provide for the conscience its true pole and the Cross is thus "the moral crisis of the world and the creator of the new conscience in historic conditions".⁴ The growth of the soul that is in Christ is the product of a two-fold movement, or action, Forsyth declared; the movement of man seeking God and of God passing into man. These movements meet not in the category of being but of action, of moral power and interplay, in virtue of which God is leading man into higher levels of perfection in communion with Himself.⁵

¹Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 101.

²Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 194-195.

³Ibid., p. 201-202. cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 30.

⁴Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 193.

⁵Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 336. He says, "They meet in action rather than in being; and the unity of being is just such as is required for mutual action and communion. God and man meet in humanity, not as two entities or natures which coexist, but as two movements in mutual interplay, mutual struggle, and reciprocal communion. On the one hand we have an initiative, creative, productive action, clear and sure, on the part of eternal and absolute God; on the other we have the seeking, receptive, appropriative action of groping, erring, growing man ... We have on the one hand the perfect God who cannot grow; and yet, as the living God, he has in his changeless nature an eternal movement which He implanted as growth in the creature He made in his image ... We have these two movements permeating the whole life of historic humanity, and founding its spiritual psychology ... All spiritual existence is action".

From this discussion a number of points emerge. First, the work of Christ achieves the destruction of the power of evil and sin not only in principle but in actuality within the context of personal life and its relations. God has destroyed sin because its power for working evil has been exhausted once-for-all in the person of Christ with whom we are united. Second, we are enabled by the power of Christ's work and His presence in and amongst us to die to sin. This is conceived as an initial engrafting into Christ upon confession of faith in Him, and as a continuing response where gradually we are led to higher levels of faith and spiritual power with the victories over sin and evil which ensue. There is an element of renunciation or of mortification in the Christian's life daily. Third, this dying with Christ follows only from our gratitude and devotion to Christ. As we have experienced the power of His sin-bearing love in forgiving and restoring us, so we respond in devotion and allegiance to Him anxious to overcome evil within ourselves and about us as sharers in His work of redeeming the world from all forms of evil. Finally, and what undergirds all of this, the relation is moral, i.e., it is the transmission of moral power from Christ to and through us in His Church. Christ has overcome, and is overcoming, the world.

X

The positive side of the doctrine of sanctification leads us to consider the role of Christ's continuing, eternal mediation as the guarantee of personal righteousness in Christian experience, and of the final realization of the ideal possibilities of human nature and the world in the divine redemptive plan. That this aspect of the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth would require extensive development taking us far outside the express limits of this thesis will be clear, if for no other reason than the practical or pastoral character of so much of the data. Nevertheless, it is important to take some account of it, in particular that aspect which relates in a specifically theoretical way to the doctrine of the Atonement.

What we are concerned with here is the fact, and the implications for the Christian, the Church, and the world, of the present high-priestly ministry, or eternal mediation, of Christ by His Spirit. That is, with what Christ is now doing as following upon the achievement of an objective atonement and His Ascension. Part of the demonstration and proof of the infinite love of God for us is this present mediatorial work of Christ who vouchsafes to us in Himself the certainty that, in spite of our failures, through His continuing work and power God is on our side, not against us, said Dale.¹ Denney classifies the continuance of Christ's work in His exaltation under three general headings: through the giving of the Holy Spirit, through Christ's personal mediatorial intercession, and through the sovereignty or glory of Christ as itself determining the quality of the Christian life.² And Forsyth declares that Christ's intercession is simply the prolonged energy of His redeeming work,

¹Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 91, 103. In a poignant passage Dale said this, "I like to recall the history, not merely of the thirty years which Christ lived on earth, but of the eighteen centuries and more, that He has been reigning at the right hand of God in heaven. I delight to think of the innumerable sins He has blotted out in every age and in every land, of His watchful interest in the spiritual conflicts, the triumphs of innumerable saints", The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 41.

²Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 152-172. cf. The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 143.

The priestly atonement of Christ was final, but it was final in the sense of working incessantly, insuperably on, not in its echoes and results with us, but in the self-sustained energies of His own almighty and immortal Spirit.¹

In enlarging the significance of this aspect of Christ's work from the writings of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, three general headings will be employed under which the doctrine will be developed. First, Christ in His mediatorial ministry is Himself the guarantee for the final realization in us of our ideal possibilities. Second, these possibilities can be achieved only within the redeemed community, the Church. And third, the redeemed community is the promise or prophecy of that divine ideal for the world and the race when they will be redeemed, finally, from the power of all forms of evil. In other words, the eternal mediation of Christ is the prophecy in process of fulfillment of that "world-interest" of redemption of which we spoke and in which God calls mankind to share with Him for its achievement.

1. The objective Atonement involves not only the finality of an accomplished redemption in Jesus Christ, who represents the realization of the ideal possibilities of human nature, it also provides through the continuing mediatorial ministry of Christ the power by which this ideal will be realized in us. Christ is Himself the guarantee of our final holiness; thus, the righteousness of God and His aim to create freedom are not only vindicated in the just judgment of sin in Christ and His perfect use of freedom, but they will be vindicated in the race itself which is the object of redemption. While it is impossible to make a strict division here between calling Christ, in Aristotelian terminology, both the efficient and final cause of our perfection, it is the former that engages our attention specifically; the latter will in the subsequent and final section of this chapter.

¹Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 143-144.

We aim to show in this section that Christ is the energizing power by His Spirit moving in and amongst us for the final fulfillment of the creative purpose of God through redemption.

To belong to Christ, said Dale, involves the appropriation of the righteousness and holiness of the new and perfect humanity which God created in Him. In Christ's glorification His humanity was brought into its true and final relation to God, and, after He had accomplished this, the Spirit came as His advocate to accomplish the same ideal -- the glorification of human nature -- in us,

When he entered into His glory a kind of life became possible to men that was not possible before.¹

Christ is both the ideal of the race, and now, not only through His perfection but through the redeeming power of His Cross, He is, as Dale insists repeatedly, the power and perfection of our lives.² Christ stands in God's presence representing us, wrote Denney, "exhibiting, as it were, in His own person, what He guarantees we shall be;"³ and this is achieved through our union with Him,

Clearly it is the truth, so characteristic of the New Testament, that there is a union between Christ and those who trust Him so close that their destiny can be read in His. All that He has experienced will be experienced by them. They are united as indissolubly as the members of the body to the head; and being planted together in the likeness of His death, they shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection ... He is never separated from those who love Him.⁴

Forsyth says that in Christ we know not a mere intermediary to God but the new creation; He is "the creator of the new man. He is the real principal."⁵ In discussing the Incarnation, Forsyth argues that alongside the self-

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 147. Note p. 144-147, and, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 310.

²Dale, The Atonement, p. 420, 248. cf. The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 44-46.

³Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 166.

⁴Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 172-173.

⁵Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 253.

emptying of the eternal Word to become man there is a corresponding idea (without which the former would be meaningless) of plerosis, or a progressive fulfillment or achievement of the divine image of God in man; and, that it is this image into which He is bringing us with Himself. This is what he means by saying that "man is constantly seeking unto a God and God is constantly passing into man" in the progress of man's spiritual development to God in Christ.¹

A point which all three writers stress is the specifically vital character, the eternal quality, of the life which ought to be the hall-mark of Christian faith. "We are made so completely one with Christ", said Dale, "that the power of His life is active in our life, as the power of the life of the vine is active in all its branches".² The Christian life, he wrote, is not one made up by the rigid observance of rules, but by a vital, dynamic outflow of the divine presence of Christ through His Spirit in us; God has given us "an inward disposition inclining us to obedience".³ A. J. Morris's sermon had left the abiding impression upon Dale that the letter kills but that the spirit enlivens; Christ is not the external law but the living internal reality of the Christian life.⁴ Denney declared that nothing in the Christian life is explained by anything statutory but that everything may be accounted for on the ground of the inspiring character of Christ's redeeming work,

morality is not the region of statute, but of inspiration, freedom, and responsibility.⁵

¹Ibid., p. 334 ff.

²Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 148.

³Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 168. cf. p. 95-96, 261; and, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 152.

⁴Morris had said in part, "Where the heart is right, the mind enlightened, and the conscience strong, precise directions may be dispensed with. You do not need to fetter a loving child with the rules you lay upon a hireling. The inward realities of the gospel require not the outward formalities of the law, Op. Cit., p. 17. cf. The Ordination Services Of The Rev. R. W. Dale, p. 32; and, Christ And The Future Life, p. 77.

⁵Denney, The Literal Interpretation Of The Sermon On The Mount; London: Hodder and Stoughton, (n.d.), p. 50. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 159.

Inspiration as the key to the Christian life is the dominant trait of Denney's theology of sanctification. Theologically, he says, the Spirit is the divine correlative of faith; and the various ways in which the power of God is manifested in Christian experience are manifestations of His activity. But considered in a total perspective, it is through the Atonement that the new quality of life derived from Christ is made ours,

But both the power and the law of the new life, the initiation of which can be so variously expressed, are to be found in the atoning death of Christ, by which faith is evoked, and there only; and the Atonement, therefore, is the presupposition of Christian ethics as it is the inspiring and controlling force in Christian life.¹

And what Christ redeems us to is the inspired life; the life of freedom and responsibility in which the ideal, Christ, is defined by the Spirit in a form appropriate to each successive moment of our existence.² Finally, Forsyth declared that eternal life in Christ for us now is a state of soul; it is the content and quality of life which we enjoy in Him,

We do not know God by Christ but in Him ... and in Christ we have Eternal life, we do not simply qualify for it, we do not just take the needful steps.³

2. In advancing beyond the foregoing, it is now our task to show that this new life can achieve its end only within the fellowship of the community of redeemed sinners, the Church. What this means is that these theologians reacted vigorously against the extreme individualism that had been the dominant motif of Evangelicalism from the time of the eighteenth century revival;

¹Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 332. cf. p. 192.

²"The true path to perfection is that of inspiration: it is the path revealed to those who stand in the presence of Christ crucified and to whom everything is legitimate -- yes, and obligatory -- which finds its motive there ... It comes by receiving the Spirit, and the Spirit is received at the Cross. It comes into us as we come under the spell of that great love, as it enters it makes us free", The Way Everlasting, p. 280-281. cf. p. 154; and, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 308-313, 327-329.

³Forsyth, This Life And The Next, p. 66.

and they sought to re-shape evangelical thought and life along the lines of the principle of interdependence. What men need is not simply deliverance from solitary sin and destruction, but rescue from their situation of feeling themselves to be exiles and orphans to the warmth and closeness of Christian fellowship, said Dale.¹ Not individualism (which may be a legitimate assertion of the infinite worth of the individual man against encroachments of society or the state) but unity is the fundamental principle of the race and the Church, he wrote; "the Christian gospel in its completeness, strikes therefore at the root of an extreme and unqualified individualism".² In the New Testament, declared Denney, such a thing as an unattached Christian was unknown; Christ and His Church are inseparable,

The souls to whom the Gospel brought in living experience the forgiveness of sin, the life of the Spirit, and the assurance of immortality, could not stand apart from each other; they were united from the beginning, and had no choice but to unite, in a new and divine fellowship.³

Extreme individualism, said Forsyth, is fatal to faith and personality must be rescued from it; Christ redeemed a Church not an aggregate of isolated souls; therefore, the individual is saved only within the community of redeemed sinners.⁴ It is clear, he said, that if Christ had not founded a Church, the thing He did found would have done so,

He created the new life, the new Covenant which, by its nature, was bound to create the Church.⁵

The importance of the Church cannot therefore be overstated as the new order, the new humanity which Christ has created by His redeeming work and

¹Dale, The Communion Of Saints, p. 31-32. cf. The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 238; Genius The Gift Of God, p. 11-12; A Manual Of Congregational Principles, p. 22.

²Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 152. cf. Fellowship With Christ, p. 307; and, The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 17, 28-31.

³Denney, The Church And The Kingdom, p. 5-6. cf. Studies In Theology, p. 188-189.

⁴Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 260-261; The Work Of Christ, p. 116-117; The Principle Of Authority, p. 267-268; Theology In Church And State, p. 92.

⁵Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 4.

which He heads. Forsyth conceives of the Church primarily as an act of God which centres in the Cross; and Denney declares that Christ is the "Eternal Head of a redeemed race of redeemed men".¹ It is in this latter sense that the Atonement is related essentially to the Church in the theology of all three: Christ is the head of a redeemed race, Christ has inaugurated a new order, Christ has created a new humanity. These are the dominant themes and they extend the role of the Church as the instrument of God to every phase of human life. The Church generally, and particular Churches, said Dale, ought to express the truth that every man is in Christ, and that it translates into action generally the relations He sustains to each particular member.² We have been brought into a new order, or new creation, where we the redeemed share our lives together with God in Christ,

Our union with each other is only less important than our union with God. We may not perfectly understand why this is, but it is so. By the structure of our nature, by the constitution of the world, it is made perfectly plain that God wants men to be one.³

Untainted by sin, declared Denney, Christ stood in the midst of the race as the new beginning for a new course of human life and history, and, as risen,

he belongs already to another world, to another mode of being. The resurrection is above all things the revelation of life in the new order, a life which has won the final triumph over sin and death.⁴

And, this new creation is a distinct community or society with its ground in Christ, "it is an original creation, new in its bond of union, in the

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 73. cf. Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 60.

²Dale, A Manual Of Congregational Principles, p. 64, 205.

³Dale, Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 69. cf. The Atonement, p. 262. God has, he said, created in Christ a new and perfect humanity, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 310.

⁴Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 114.

law by which it lives, in the objects at which it aims; a church in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ".¹ Forsyth maintains that the Church is the finest product of the Spirit in history, "it stands for the New Creation, the New Humanity, and it has that in trust".² By a new humanity Forsyth means in the first instance a morally revolutionized race with a new moral centre and ethic which with God will aim at the redemption of the whole world to the service of righteousness; the Christian conception of these new relations is not mere brotherliness, he says,

but the triumph of the righteousness of a holy Father on the scale of the human brotherhood -- on the scale of brotherhood as set up by the Cross in the new conscience of penitent love, covering a New Humanity whose unity is holy, i.e., absolutely moral in the conscience.³

But before leaving this discussion on the Church, some account ought to be taken of the role of the Christian sacraments in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth in relation to the work of Christ and human response. Essentially, they hold that the sacraments exhibit the redeemed character and communal nature of the Church, and its Christo-centric orientation. The sacraments, said Dale, are expressions of the divine thought, "they are revelations of Christ in acts, not in words, or in things".⁴ Denney declares that there is a mysterious power of God which operates in the celebration of the sacraments; they signify, he says, "the perpetual presence in the Church of the saving power of the Lord's Passion".⁵ However, this he regards as the presence of Christ not in the elements, but amongst and in us in the sense of the elements, i.e., as revelatory of

¹Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 9. Later he wrote, "The faith which unites men to Christ is a common faith, and in uniting them to Him it unites them to one another. It constitutes them members of a society, of a new humanity living with a new life, the life of faith in Jesus", The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 322.

²Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 5. cf. p. 55; and, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 256.

³Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 103. cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 29.

⁴Dale, A Manual Of Congregational Principles, p. 123. cf. The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 358.

⁵Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 279. cf. p. 135.

the divine redeeming act and as conveying the power of that act to us. The New Testament, he says,

suggests a real presence and working of Christ in the celebration of the sacraments, when they are celebrated as they originally were, and were always intended to be, in penitence and faith. It is not a presence in the elements, but a presence in the sense of the elements, and to the intent signified by them.¹

Forsyth maintained that in the sacraments Christ offers Himself to us anew -- thus we are not to quench the mystery -- they are acts of the Church, and, as moral acts, they are capable both of assisting and creating the response of faith. Of the Communion he says,

As a moral act it creates moral action in response. Its nature is intelligible. Its effects cannot remain outside the conscious soul -- though, as its scope is the whole world, the vast part of its range is beyond our conscious grasp or experience.²

But they are not only moral acts which may evoke response, they are acts which convey Christ to the Church,

What is given to us is Christ Himself, His person in its supreme redeeming and regenerating Act given to God.³

That there is an analogy between the foregoing and the views advanced by Dr. Hodgson, particularly on the point of the functional as against the structural significance of the elements, will be clear from a comparison of what they have written with what Dr. Hodgson said in his recent Gifford lecture, though this is not to deny that there are important differences between them at other points.⁴

3. The final aspect of this section will aim to show that the community of redeemed sinners is the prophecy of the final kingdom which the redeeming act of God aims to achieve. Dale said that in the Church the life of Christ on earth is extended; the Church is the home of God on earth, and part of the purpose behind her institution is to rescue us from our personal religious

¹Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 109.

²Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 230-231.

³Ibid., p. 266. cf. p. 176-177.

⁴cf. Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 154 ff.

anxieties to the broad perspective of what God through her aims to accomplish in the world.¹ Not only have the relations between God and the world been revolutionized and a new epoch inaugurated, he said, but God aims to consummate all His designs in the world,

Our final glory will consist, not in the restoration of the solitary soul to solitary communion with God, but in the fellowship of all the blessed with the blessedness of the universe as well as with the blessedness of God.²

For Denney, an accomplished atonement signified the supremacy of Christ throughout the universe, and, in particular, the glory of Christ's Kingdom is His power through the lives of the redeemed community reconciling the world to Himself.³ Denney unambiguously equates the Church with the Kingdom making the former the developing ideal which will eventually grow into the latter through its ever-increasing evangelizing and redeeming activities. When criticizing any attempt to disparage the Church in favour of the Kingdom he said,

there is no faith in Him, no vision of Him, which does not bring immortality to light; the Kingdom is one with Him; it regains in the Church that transcendent and heavenly character which it bears in the Gospels, but which so readily vanishes in the streets.⁴

Forsyth said that the nature of Christianity involved a social revolution wherever it touched; and, that the Church has in it the ethical principle -- the Christian Gospel -- of the new humanity and social order.⁵ Through His final redemptive act God has assured the redemption of the world, and He

¹Dale, "The Idea Of The Church In Relation To Modern Congregationalism", in A Second Series Of Essays On Theological And Ecclesiastical Questions (ed. H. R. Reynolds); London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1871, p. 399; The Communion Of Saints, p. 13.

²Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 108. cf. The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 20; The Coming Of Christ; London: J. Williams-Cook, 1895, p. 15.

³Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 197; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 160.

⁴Denney, The Church And The Kingdom, p. 95 ff. cf. Studies In Theology, p. 173-184.

⁵Forsyth, Theology In Church And State, p. 252; Missions In State And Church, p. 170.

through His redeemed community is achieving its reconciliation to Himself. We are now, he says, in the process of an eternal teleological drift whose end is in Christ,

The work of Christ produced a Church ... to work out in history His finality in principle, and to complete His creative perfection, as He Himself grew in the perfection which was always His.¹

This final redemptive act of God in Christ now being actualized is what Forsyth designates "The New Calvinism". It is the conception of God acting not despotically, but redemptively in Christ, to save the world from its sin and evil to His own image of perfection,

Such is the moral majesty of God -- God not as the Eternal Imperative of the conscience but as its Everlasting Redeemer. His absolute royalty is founded in His absolute and finished salvation of the whole world. And the centre of majesty has passed, since Calvin, from the decrees of God to His act, to the foregone establishment in Christ's Cross of a moral Kingdom without end, which is the key and goal of history.²

The point which emerges from the foregoing development of the relation of Christ's continuing mediatorial ministry to the individual, the Church, and the world, and which is of special interest because it connects the character of human response to the work of Christ and the quality of life in Christ, is that the Church does not exist just to save sinners from judgment but to share with God His redeeming purpose for saving the world from sin and evil. The importance of this both for the individual and the Church at large is clearer to us now than it was to many of the contemporaries of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth in the light of the now wider adoption of this fundamental principle, especially on the problems of inter-church relations in the face of the total task in the world which yet confronts the Church. It will be recalled that Dr. Hodgson has developed this conception at some

¹Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 198. cf. The Principle Of Authority, p. 183-184.

²Forsyth, Faith, Freedom, And The Future, p. 277.

length not only in his book on the Atonement, but also more recently in his Gifford Lectures. Repeatedly he has stressed that "the Church is the earthly body through which the crucified, risen, ascended Lord wills to carry on His work of rescue."¹ We have already shown how clearly Dale enunciates this viewpoint.² The duties of the citizens of the Kingdom, said Forsyth, are binding on the members of the Church, "they are to carry the new life into every department of human activity, and by so doing to Christianize all".³ When commenting on the cosmic scope of Christ's redemption Forsyth remarked that while "it is well to convert a man, it is more to convert an age".⁴ To the confusion which besets the world, he said, Christianity offers the three-fold unity of the Cross, namely, the holy love and grace of God in Christ, the divine saving judgment in dealing with evil and sin, and the creation of the New Humanity as the portent of the future age. It is to this fellowship of toil and suffering with and for Christ that we are called as a community of redeemed sinners to share His work; "we are in the world to act and take the consequences".⁵

¹cf. For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 131.

²Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 364. For a poignant rhetorical statement on the character of the new order and the Christian's share in helping to achieve it note The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 86.

³Denney, Studies In Theology, p.198.

⁴Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 177.

⁵Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 59.

XI

In drawing our discussion of the relevance of the objective Atonement to the world and man to a close, there is one further point to be enlarged upon. It is that through Christ not only has there been achieved a moral victory over evil and sin in the world by means of an act of sin-bearing love in virtue of which the world and the race have been and are being redeemed by God, but, in Christ the eternal Son of God there has been set up the centre of good, in a form which is both eternal and historical. There is in Him the storehouse of values -- a conservatory of values -- in an ideal life exhibited for us in actuality yet as eternal, and acting upon us persuasively to choose freely the better values. The Christian life is a life of continuing response, of growth and progress, and of deepening and broadening insights on the significance of the redemptive purpose of God.

Dale and Denney, but Forsyth in particular, maintain that God has ordered the world as a world of value and concrete data in the nature of a vast cosmic, teleological drift moving to the goal of the creation of a community of free persons who will choose to fellowship with Him in His purpose of maximizing good in the universe. And, when evil and sin entered this order God resolved, while still retaining His aim to create in them freedom, to redeem them in a fashion that would destroy evil and sin and achieve His original goal. What we have now to see is that God has not only overcome evil with good, borne the evil of sin Himself, and redeemed us through Christ by enhancing not destroying our freedom; He has also in Christ set up a store of eternal values which call us on, which persuade us to move forward, to choose better, so that in ourselves and in the world around us the ideal possibilities which He in His infinite wisdom has in view will be realized. A perfect response to the lure¹ of the ideal possibilities of the race was first genuinely made by

¹The use of this word was suggested by A. N. Whitehead. See Appendix.

Jesus Christ, and, we who worship Him as the eternal Son of God may see in Him the complete exemplification of those perfect ideals which lure us on. The eternal has intruded into the temporal and now the temporal through the final redeeming act is drawn to realize the eternal within itself and for the world. Redemption means more than a ticket to heaven; it is a calling, the high calling of fellowship with God through His redeeming act and in the redeemed community to share with Him His labour of saving the world.

Fundamental to the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth is the conception of selves developing their potential by the absorption of powers, or data from without. In both the spiritual and material spheres, said Dale, man's life is the history of the gradual extension of his alliance as a free personality with a Power which is not his own.¹ And Denney declared that each of us has been a subject of evolution, that our moral life has been the development from a mode of being purely natural.² But it is Forsyth who constructs a metaphysic of being which so strikingly resembles what we have shown from Whitehead. It will be recalled that what we have said about teleological closes in Forsyth strongly resembles what Whitehead calls actual entities. These closes are ends in themselves; they are stages, levels, or entities at which the teleological process has arrived in the creative or revelatory activity of God; and the crucial exemplification of this is, for the Christian, in Christ who sums up in Himself the divine purpose for the race,

So the evolutionary process culminates from time to time in results which are not mere products of the process but are imposed on it by a will; and they have more value than mere points of transition or links of past and future ... The Christian case is that this cosmic end has been anticipated with condensed finality at one point of history, for the sake of all the rest, in the absolute end, act, and personality of Jesus Christ.³

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 417.

²Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 55. cf. The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 202.

³Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 153. cf. p. 146. Earlier he had said that "the final purpose always controls the evolving process, and the drift of the context", Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 30.

Christ is God intruding into history, achieving holiness in a perfect life, redeeming us by laying it down upon the Cross, and now in resurrection power drawing us to Himself. He is, as Dale said, the perfection and power of our life or the final cause of our nature drawing us ever toward Himself.¹ The Stoic conception, he said, that placed a divine word at the root of every man's life bore witness to the truth that every man's history "should be a translation into character and conduct, not of any ideal of perfection arbitrarily constructed or chosen by himself, but of a divine thought and purpose".²

But the aim of the divine ideal in eliciting response is persuasive. God cannot create free beings except by training them in the proper exercise of their freedom so He draws us to Himself by the concentration of the ideal possibilities of man actualized in Jesus Christ. The idea, said Dale, of an ictic creation of free perfected personalities must be rejected either when God creates or when He re-creates in redemption,

That is not God's way of creating living things. It is certainly not the order of the spiritual life ... The second birth is followed by years of infancy. The Divine life develops slowly according to the conditions of its environment.³

The capacities and powers which man has in virtue of his freedom require development and the loftiest forms of human genius which will serve as a blessing to the race will be the effects of a healthy and vigorous religious life, Dale wrote.⁴ It will be remembered that Dale, Denney, and Forsyth

¹Dale, Preface, p. lviii. "Hence, while the Lord Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person, He is also the visible manifestation of the glory of human nature, and the "idea" and prophecy of its moral and spiritual excellence, and of its true relation to God. He is God's "Word" to us; and there is a sense in which He is also our "Word" to God".

²Dale, "Preliminary Essay", Op. Cit., p. XVII.

³Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 197.

⁴Dale, Genius The Gift Of God, p. 5-6.

described the universe as fundamentally a moral order of powers to which we add our own choices and actions, either for good or evil. Our aim ought to be to concentrate our energies in faithfulness to the moral ideal in Christ, said Denney; through Christ, who is our moral ideal and leader, we are constrained to fight the good fight against sin.¹ But it is Forsyth who gathers these ideas together most vividly and clearly. It is the purpose of God, he said, that no good shall ever be lost;² and He has called us into His fellowship to help Him in His purpose of saving the world from its evil and sin. There is in man, he says, "a reacting, and controlling, and constructing power over the influences that produced him. And in that element lies the key of history".³ The human soul is not a mere dynamic convergence, rather, it has an "active, a law-giving power, a valuing, selective, nay creative power, a power of growth and of mastery".⁴ In the following quotation Forsyth summarizes the ideas we have discussed showing that Christ is both efficient and final cause; He is both the power of God saving us and the divine lure drawing us. We are redeemed through Christ into that freedom which is the heritage of the Sons of God,

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 223, 249-250.

²Forsyth, This Life And The Next, p. 42.

³Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 51-52.

⁴Forsyth, Theology In Church And State, p. 154.

the soul, as eternal, by an epigenetic power on its environment, selects some directions of change for its own, and discards others. It is thus the real creative power in things. It exercises over them all a creative criticism, appreciative, selective, and expansive. This idea of a creative criticism from above is more positive and Christian than that of creative evolution. It does more justice to personality and pays it more respect ... For it gives room for that election, that choice, which must always be associated with the notion of a personal God in relation to His world. The conviction of that eternity which is the true immortality, of that timeless simultaneity and compatibility of things, is what really sets up the idea of progress; since, as I say, only an eternal and final standard which is at once ground and goal, and which unites in itself both causation and finality, enables us to describe any movement in time as progress or the reverse.¹

What this means is that as Christians in the Church look forward to the fuller realization of the divine purpose in them and through them in the world around -- as heirs of what God has done and disclosed thus far -- their responsibility increases, Denney wrote.² Neither the Church nor the individual Christians who comprise her number can remain static in any area of their life; movement toward the divine ideal in Christ involves continuing growth and development, new revelations of truth and insights into the divine activity, and new levels of inspired living and service through the Holy Spirit. The theological structure of faith cannot remain a static inert corpus, but the organization into a noble system of those truths which are living forces in the Church, wrote Dale.³ A doctrinal definition, said Denney, cannot be held as a trust deed for all time; the hands of the future

¹Forsyth, This Life And The Next, p. 75-76.

²Letters Of Principal James Denney To W. Robertson Nicoll, p. 39.

³Dale, The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 60.

cannot be tied.¹ And Forsyth was well-known in his day for his resistance to the doctrine that theology is a closed system. For example, he says,

A theology, therefore, which is organised on a system of thought closed and self-contained can never be a due expression of that action, that revelation of a personal God, which creates religion; and certainly it cannot be its measure²

The Christian ideal is dynamic, growing, expanding, in thought as well as in moral sensitiveness and energy. Our problems ought not to be construed as dilemmas, but as opportunities³ for the exercise of the greatest measure of tolerance, love, persuasion, and insight of which we are capable, for in the resolution of the problem according to the mind of Christ there lies for us probably a new insight or stage of spiritual development. With God we are called upon to shape the course of a new world founded upon the redeeming love of God and His purpose to maximize freedom, goodness and truth. Our reconciliation is assured in Christ, Denney wrote, but it is never complete; both position and progress are true; we can never rest content in our salvation while God continues with His work of deliverance. We must, with the Apostles and Christians of all ages, take a Christo-centric view of the universe sharing not only its spiritual heritage of our own personal salvation but the driving power and alluring hope of the final end of all things in the God who in Christ reconciles all things to Himself. Or, as Forsyth said,

If in Christ we have found the heart of God and the secret of His action with men, we have also found the divine purpose for the whole world, the divine action in the world, and the divine principle of history. We have the ground of all things in the goal of all things.⁴

¹Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 118.

²Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 95. cf. p. 211-212; Theology In Church And State, p. 59 ff; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 279.

³Forsyth, Rome, Reform, And Reaction, p. 18.

⁴Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 206. cf. Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 48-51; Laws Of Life For The Common Life, p. 55-56. Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 24.

Chapter IIIREVELATION, FAITH, AND ATONEMENToutline

- I The value and importance of the Scriptures; inspiration. Revelation as divine act interpreted by men inspired to see its significance. The authority of scripture; the epistemological ideal, p. 232.
- II (A) Direct divine access to the lives of men by the Holy Spirit. The revelation of Christ to the soul is an act of God. Personal confrontation of Christ. Personal faith a moral reality. The doctrine of the Trinity and personal faith in Christ, p. 244.
 (B) The events of human experience comprise the media of revelation. Objective and subjective elements in faith. The authority of personal faith; its self-authenticating character. Faith as salvation, p. 258.
- III The idea of personal faith attended by certain dangers and problems, p. 264.
 - (1) What is the status of men unreached by the Gospel? Election, predestination, reprobation. Morality and religion; saving and justifying faith. The importance of an objective atonement for the world's unreached. The future of the race is in the hands of God, p. 265.
 - (2) Is personal faith consistent with the character of revelation? p. 274.
 - (3) Is assured personal faith consistent with the true character of Christian faith? (a) Intellectual, (b) Emotional, (c) and Volitional elements of faith. Faith as unshakeable conviction of the truth and reality of the redeeming act and activity of God in Christ, p. 275.

I

No one can read the books of these three theologians without sensing the value and importance of the Scriptures to them and the air of piety which pervades their writings. But this devotion rests on certain specific convictions on the nature and authority of the Scriptures. In this connection, it is important to note that their ministries embrace a critical period of history in the Church on the problems of the inspiration and authority of scripture. In fact, it is possible to trace a progress of

thought amongst the three which in a significant way epitomizes the development of thought on these problems in the Church generally. Dale was compelled to confront the initial onslaught of radical criticism and the revised scientific ideas of the time as these appeared to undermine the foundations of faith. Denney, chiefly a biblical scholar, was occupied much with the advanced critical questions of his day. Whereas, by the time Forsyth wrote the books of his mature years a general compromise on the status and limits of critical scholarship appears to have been reached which he presupposes.

It is clear that a proper understanding of their views in this area of theology is important. On the one hand there are some who have mistakenly supposed that their theology -- particularly that of Denney -- is founded upon a certain doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, while others have criticized them for just this. For example, Dr. Rashdall brings forward the charge that Dale's argument is founded on pre-critical exegetical principles and that it is therefore unconvincing. He says that Dale assumes that every word attributed to Christ by the Evangelists including the Fourth Gospel represents His words exactly. The real ground of Dale's argument, he says, is a particular view of the authority of scripture in which the plenary inspiration of St. Paul's epistles is maintained together with an uncritical reading of his views into those of the Synoptic Gospels. And, he urges, Denney's views are equally unconvincing for similar reasons, but all the more so when it is remembered that Denney does not share Dale's uncritical assumptions.¹ That neither of these general impressions of the position of Dale and Denney, or of Forsyth is true will be clear from the following.

¹Hastings Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 45-46, 495. Note also W. L. Walker, The Cross And The Kingdom; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902, p. 2.

Dale insisted that Christian scholarship must have the widest possible freedom to "criticize and reconstruct the text of Holy Scripture". This claim was qualified only by his sincere conviction that honest scholarship would confirm rather than destroy the essential elements of the faith. In The Atonement he claimed to advance an argument for the structure of his doctrine taking into account the facts recounted by the apostles and experienced in the life of the Church whether they were inspired or uninspired.¹ From his youth as a theological student Denney insisted on absolute liberty in exercising scholarly judgment on the text and canon of the Scriptures. Our concern, he said, is not with the "original autographs" of Scripture about which nobody knows anything, but with a text that will accurately represent the words of Jesus. Constructive criticism, he declared, always inspires confidence in the substantial trustworthiness of the gospel records.² And Forsyth wrote that just as the gospel had laid hold upon Europe by its novelty rather than its antiquity, so the dethroned and injured spirit of imagination has rebelled against the crass literalism which characterized post-Reformation theology. Christ's deeds -- His acts -- conveyed much to His followers on both who He was and what He did beyond anything His words could convey.³

¹Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 109-113. cf. The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 1-5; A Manual Of Congregational Principles, p. 131; The Atonement, p. 50; Preface, p. xxiii.

²Denney, Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 4; Studies In Theology, p. 204, 209-215; "Preaching Christ", Op. Cit., p. 399.

³Forsyth, Religion In Recent Art, p. 60; The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 54; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 144, 19-21, 133, 279; The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 262-266, 276; Holy Christian Empire, p. 12-16; "Introduction", in J. Munro Gibson, The Inspiration And Authority Of Holy Scripture; London: National Council Of Evangelical Churches, 1908, p. xiii, xvi. Note also "The Evangelical Churches And The Higher Criticism", The Contemporary Review, Vol. LXXXVIII, 1905. Among other things Forsyth said that the proper task of sound criticism is the reduction of the vast bulk of belief; the results of criticism ought not to be prejudiced; it can neither settle nor unsettle the essentials of the faith; faith is essential to sound criticism; and, the work of the critic will be shown, finally, to consist in pruning the tree of faith for greater fruitfulness.

It is clear that the traditional form of the problem of inspiration did not concern Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. There is some doubt as to just what Dale meant by inspiration when applied to scripture, but certainly he did not mean verbal inspiration.¹ It is true, he said, that the Old Testament ordinances were divinely sanctioned and the prophets divinely inspired. Yet the books which record these "may not have been kept free, even in their original and uncorrupted form, from all mistake;"² our confidence in the revelation mediated to the world through the Jewish nation does not require us to believe that "every book that the Jewish people counted sacred was assigned by them to its true date and its true author, or that the accuracy of the historical contents of these books is guaranteed by Divine inspiration".³ We will never know what inspiration means, said Denney, until the Scriptures have been resolved into a unity for us. The Bible is itself a part of the tradition handed down to us by the Church and only when it has become a means of grace to us do we discover the significance of its inspiration, "it is through an experience of its power that words like inspiration come to have any meaning, and when we define them apart from such experience we are playing with empty sounds."⁴ Forsyth also rejects the doctrine of verbal inspiration; inspiration, he says, has to do with the souls of men rather than with books.⁵

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 20. cf. The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 45.

²Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 20-21.

³Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 216.

⁴Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 202-203. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 316; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 109, 350, 396; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 18. In Studies In Theology, p. 20, Denney said that while in the Westminster Confession the doctrine of the Scriptures dominates the first chapter, in the original Scots Confession drawn up by John Knox in 1560 it stood much later under the means of grace, and that this is where he believed it rightly belonged in recognition of the practical end the Scriptures serve.

⁵Forsyth, Rome, Reform, And Reaction, p. 224; The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, Ch. V and VI; Christ On Parnassus, p. 243 ff; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 38, 125-126; "Unity And Theology", in Towards Reunion; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1919, p. 53.

But the key issue here is the nature of revelation and until this is understood their doctrine of the authority of scripture will remain obscure. It will be recalled that repeated stress has been laid in this study upon the importance of conceiving revelation as divine act for a proper understanding of the Atonement in the theology of these men. It has been claimed that revelation for them is primarily God acting in creation and redemption and then inspiring men by the Holy Spirit to see the significance of those events, and we must now turn to an enlargement of this.

In his sermon The Living God The Saviour Of All Men Dale insisted that the primary task of the Christian is to proclaim the Living God -- God who is alive, personal, and active in creation, providence, and redemption, "It is the Living God that we are commissioned to proclaim to mankind".¹ And in the Preface when answering certain criticisms levelled against The Atonement Dale categorically disavows any claim to infallibility for the New Testament. He declares, rather, that "the Revelation consists, not merely or chiefly in words, but in Divine acts".² Thus Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh or the personal intrusion of God into history, discloses to us the activity of God by His Spirit not only then but now also. Our whole life, he wrote, rests "not merely on the remembrance of deeds once done and words once spoken centuries ago, but on the present and personal activity of the Most High".³ Not only are the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ divine acts, but the continuing work of God in the Church by the mission of the Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies men, and the new relations

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 14-17.

²Dale, Preface, p. xxx; cf. The Atonement, p. 39, it is not in words, but in deeds, that we have the deeper revelation of the divine compassion, he said; Christian Doctrine, p. 39, 256-257, "every act of God must contain a revelation of God".

³Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 15.

men sustain to God in virtue of that ministry are also acts of God and revelatory.¹

In its primary sense, declared Denney, revelation is not verbal, propositional, nor abstract, but the disclosure of the living, personal, acting God. What the Jewish prophets disclosed, he said, was the significance of the divine intrusion into history which for them was known as the Word of God. Christian theology emerges from the action of God in history. But the consummation of the revelatory and redemptive activity of God is in the person and work of Christ, "the very heart of the Gospel's attraction is this, that the Son of Man is the revealer of God The Father".² What is revelatory about God manifest in the flesh is that "he appears in act as the minister and mediator of reconciliation, and when we realize what He is doing, the possibility, the reality, and the nature of reconciliation are made plain to us".³ In the foregoing quotation the emphasis must fall on "he appears in act" and "when we realize what He is doing". Here the position enunciated by Dale is clearly that maintained by Denney and the comparison with the views of Dr. Hodgson is striking.

Forsyth also says that revelation is not a thing of process, truths, creed, or system, but of persons and personal acts.⁴ "I mean by Christian revelation", he said, "the revelation Christ effected, and not only what He taught"; and, a little later he wrote,

If only we could grasp the idea of revelation as something done instead of something shown, as creation instead of exhibition, as renovation instead of innovation, as resurrection instead of communication.⁵

¹Dale, Preface, p. xxx. cf. Constructive Congregational Ideals (ed. D. Macfadyen); London: H. R. Allenson, 1902, p. 139.

²Denney, On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 32. cf. p. 64. The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 144; The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 55, 93; The Way Everlasting, p. 4; Studies In Theology, p. 17-18.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 13.

⁴Forsyth, "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 98-99, 104-106; Rome, Reform, And Reaction, p. 125; The Church And The Sacraments, p. 101-102; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 214.

⁵Forsyth, The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 73, 80.

As early as 1893 he had written, "revelation then may be defined as the free, final and effective act of God's self-communication in Jesus Christ for man's redemption".¹ God has entered into history personally in Christ and the apprehension of what He is, has done, and is doing, constitutes the final and continuing revelation of God. In the following quotation the personal character of the divine act and its historical context are stressed,

The last moral reality is a person not in repose but in action with the world. The real God is in the soul, active in history, and master of the world ... And therefore, God's way of carrying home His love to the world was by a person who was realised in one act corresponding to the unity of the person and the scale of the world ... The Cross effects the reconciliation of man and God; it does not simply announce it, or simply prepare it ... Revelation must be an act. Reality is action.²

But if God has acted and continues to act in creation, providence, and redemption to bring into existence a community of free persons in fellowship with Himself whose aim is to maximize goodness, there remains the interpretation of the act, or the apprehension of its meaning. This is where we touch on the epistemological ideal of Christian faith and the ultimate principle of authority.³ It is necessary that the divine Word which is mediated through the Scriptures and through the continuing life and activity of the Church should be apprehended, and this is possible because the fundamental categories of the faith are relevant to human experience and because the Holy Spirit brings home to men the truth of the divine activity.

Dale, when discussing the authority of Scripture, pointed out that the

¹Forsyth, "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p.116.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 346-347. cf. The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 8.

³Dr. Hodgson has said, "It seems to me that I must start from the fundamental principle that God Himself is the active source of all revelation. I am not listening to hear what the Bible says, but what God is seeking to say to me through its words", For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 22.

forms of human experience, thought, and language are the necessary media of the divine revelation, but not its substance; we are to look for the truth behind the metaphor, image, or myth,

Human forms of thought and human conceptions of material things, were the necessary vesture of divine revelation, as truly as human language, which is indeed nothing but a brief summary of what man has come to think about himself and the world.¹

For Dale, the authority of scripture is the truth of scripture, as he makes plain in the following,

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.²

Some of the categories by which we apprehend the divine truth, he said, are: eternal life in Christ, the remission of sins, the new birth, the power and grace of the Holy Spirit in Christian experience, prayer, the consciousness of the living Christ among us, the authority of Christ over us, practical morality, judgment, and the concepts of future blessedness and glory.³ It is only as the Holy Spirit illuminates the minds of men to apprehend the significance of the divine acts that they are known as revelatory. In the case of the apostles, for example, the substance of their faith and teaching was what the "illumination of the Spirit enabled them to discover in Christ". Thus, he argues, the "spirit of wisdom" may also be called the "spirit of revelation", for unless the former is given the revelation is unintelligible; "it becomes actual revelation when it is understood".⁴ And, we have observed already how Dale thought that the important example of this was the apostolic

¹Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 21. cf. The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 11-12; The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 193-194; Christian Doctrine, p. 323-324.

²Dale, Protestantism: Its Ultimate Principle; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1874, p. 63. cf. The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 19, 143; Genius The Gift Of God, p. 16; Fellowship With Christ, p. 112; The Funeral Services Occasioned By The Death Of J. A. James, p. 23, 46.

³Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 43.

⁴Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 137-140. cf. Christian Doctrine, p. 39.

understanding of the preeminence of Christ both in relation to the universe as its creator and sustainer and to the race as its supreme moral ruler in Colossians 1:16-17. Dale's words bear repeating where he insists that they reached this conclusion 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".¹

The authority of scripture, declared Denney, is not the letter but the Spirit working through it to convey the Word of God; it is an authority which imposes itself winning the free recognition and surrender of the mind and heart.² We are concerned with the authority not of a text of scripture, but of every word that leaps out on us from the Bible, he said,

No Christian questions such a proposition as this, that God actually speaks to man through the Scriptures, and that man hears the voice and knows it to be God's ... it is really a doctrine of the word of God, or of the divine message to man; but it is too apt to be construed as if it were a doctrine of the text of Scripture.³

In Jesus Christ, he wrote, time and eternity coincide, and it is the apprehension of this fact by the apostles in their own way yet by the Holy Spirit that is set forward in the New Testament. This same self-guaranteeing power of the presence of Christ is vouchsafed to us through the apostolic witness by that same Spirit.⁴ Thus, there can be no such thing as blank authority.

¹Dale, The Atonement, p. 408. cf. p. 405; Preface, p. xxxi.

²Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 398. cf. Studies In Theology, p. 219-221; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 41, 216.

³Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 204. cf. p. 206-209; Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 23, "the Word of God infallibly carries God's power to save men's souls. That is the only kind of infallibility I believe in"; he speaks of the Bible "or rather the Word of God as a means of grace and as a spiritual authority", Letters Of Principal James Denney to W. Robertson Nicoll, p. 4.

⁴Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 15, 378-379. cf. "Preaching Christ", Op. Cit., p. 399; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 32; Studies In Theology, p. 207.

for the mind, even though that authority be biblical; the truth must make its own appeal as a conviction full of power carrying the mind with it. Dogma must square with conscience -- albeit it is a conscience now enlightened by the Holy Spirit.¹ We find the epistemological ideal at the point where the Word of God regarding the revelation of God in Christ is mediated to us by the same Spirit who confirmed the faith of, and granted insight to, the apostles. He writes,

The Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word of the evangelists in our hearts, gives us, independently of any criticism, a full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the revelation of God made in Him ... there is a point, viz., the life of the Son of God in our nature, at which the spiritual and historical coincide, and at which, therefore, as the very purpose of revelation requires, there can be a spiritual guarantee for historical truth.²

It is possible to summarize the teaching of Principal Denney on this subject under three general ideas: First, the revelation is apprehended intuitively. For example, the idea of salvation from sin, he says, refuses to allow the mind rest in any conception which excludes atonement, "the simplest Christian spirit which has the anointing of the Holy One ... knows instinctively whether that by which it lives is present in the message it hears or not".³ Second, revelation is apprehended in terms of rational insight, that is, in the contrast between exegesis and exposition. It is not difficult, he argues, to provide an exegesis of a point or an explanation of the Church's teaching; but what is difficult is "to say precisely what is of faith in the matter, what is made sure to the heart by the witness of the Spirit".⁴

¹Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 7-8. cf. The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 58, 84, 86; Studies In Theology, p. 25-26. The Apostles and the witness conveyed in the Scriptures inspire in us "an intellectual interest in the Gospel answering to their own, not by imposing their thoughts authoritatively upon us as a law to our faith", Jesus And The Gospel, p. 409.

²Studies In Theology, p. 207.

³Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 284. cf. p. 285-286; Studies In Theology, p. 50.

⁴Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 229. cf. Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 17.

Revelation and insight are the divine and human aspects of the relation God and man sustain to each other,

The only religious convictions which are ultimately superior to doubt have to be attained in another way; they are revelations on the one side, and discoveries, or insights, on the other.¹

Third, he introduces the pragmatic idea of correspondence with need as vouchsafing apprehension of revelation. A revelational fact must be full of emotional or practical, as well as rational or ethical, content. And what constitutes the death of Christ the supreme revelational act of God and appeal to man is its answer to the problem of sin,

The atoning Death of Christ as a revelation of God, is a thing itself so intelligible, so correspondent to a universal need, so direct and universal in its appeal, that it must be the basis of a universal religion ... It is the very heart of revelation itself.²

The authority of scripture, said Forsyth, lies in the Gospel or truth of Scripture. In the New Testament documents we have a prolongation of the message of Christ as He interprets Himself by the Holy Spirit through the lives of those who experienced His redeeming power,

they are Christ himself interpreting his finished work, through men in whom not they lived but he lived in them.³

Christ for Forsyth, we noted, is materially the finality of revelation, but not formally. He represents a juncture in the divine act of redemption and the disclosure of it, but He is incomplete unless the formal element -- the interpretation which is to be received by men -- is complete. The role of the apostles was to bring to a close this sequence. Thus, the New Testament is not the first stage of an evolutionary process but the last phase of a revelational deed and its disclosure for them. The apostolic inspiration was

¹Denney, Gospel Questions And Answers, p. 24-25.

²Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 118.

³Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 60.

the unique and final interpretation of the unique and final revelation; both fact and word are joined in their experience and witness.¹

The position taken by Forsyth is parallel with that advanced by Dale and Denney. Revelation is the Holy Spirit bringing home to the mind the significance of the act of God in Christ to redeem the world. Here again we are concerned with the coincidence of Word and Spirit in the experience of men,

The Holy Spirit which inspired the universal Word is not only immanent in it always as the Creator Spirit is in universal nature, but also present to the soul every time the Word comes home. The ministry of the Word is the chief agency of the Holy Ghost, and the chief function of the Church; whose business is not simply publication of a truth but the confession of an experience -- the experience of the indwelling Spirit and its life. It is the Holy Spirit that makes the Word to be revelation; it is the Word that makes revelation historic and concrete.²

We see therefore that the work of the Holy Spirit was to inspire the apostles to understand the true meaning of Christ's person and work. When discussing what the "spiritual man" meant for St. Paul, Forsyth wrote,

The inspiration of the apostle was not in discovering the idea; it was in seeing its real truth and consummation to be in the fact and act of Christ ... Christ by his work made them saints, and by the inspiration of his Spirit he made them theologians ... The meaning is that by the supernatural gift of the Spirit, possessed only in the Church, Paul had knowledge of the intention of Christ, Christ's implicit thought, God's meaning in Christ, the theology of Christ and the cross.³

But, while the revelation is given, it is also discovered. The Holy Spirit, he said, works in such a fashion that we recognize not only His action in us

¹Ibid., p. 152, 160-161. On p. 179 he wrote, "The authority in the Bible is more than the authority of the Bible; and it is the historic and present Christ as Saviour. The Gospel and not the book is the true region of inspiration or infallibility -- the discovery of the one Gospel and His cross. That is the sphere of inspiration. That is where inspiration is infallible".

²Forsyth, Faith, Freedom, And The Future, p. 15. cf. p. 33-34; "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 104, 116, 121; The Principle Of Authority, p. 116; "Revelation And The Bible", Hibbert Journal, Vol. X, 1912, p. 235-252.

³Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 160-161, 163.

drawing us to the truth, but our own finding of it in historic conditions, Revelation came home to them as discovery. It burst from experience. So gracious is God with His revelation that He actually lets it come home to us as if we had discovered it.¹

And what happened in the experience of the apostles continues in the growing understanding of the Church as she apprehends by that same Spirit the broader implications of the redeeming work of God in Christ for the world and the race.

II

(A) For Dale, Denney, and Forsyth this doctrine of revelation means that the Atonement is applied in human experience by a divine intrusion when through the Holy Spirit we are brought into personal confrontation with God in Jesus Christ. That the providential dealings of God mediate His goodness to us in a thousand ways is acknowledged, but what the activity of God aims at is that we know Him in Christ as the personal God redeeming us from sin and uniting us in fellowship with Himself.

The first step to be taken in developing this theme is to see that God by the Holy Spirit has direct access to the lives of men. The initiative is of God. In all Christian work, and in particular the work of evangelism, wrote Dale, we ought to remember that the Spirit of God has "direct access to the inner depths of the human soul which lie far beyond the reach of all argument and of all appeal".² The final power, he says, which prevails upon men who submit to Christ is neither the preacher's "power" nor his "holiness", but "the direct appeal of the Spirit of God to the conscience and the heart".³

¹Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 57.

²Dale, The Holy Spirit In Relation To The Ministry, The Worship, And The Work Of The Church, second edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1869, p. 10-11. cf. Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 25.

³Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 177. Note p. 176-181. The prerogative of Protestantism, he said, is not an illicit freedom, but "the right to listen to God when God speaks to us, and the right to receive the teaching of the Spirit of God which is one of the noblest prerogatives that Christ confers on all who believe in Him", Protestantism: Its Ultimate Principle, p. 38.

The truth of what Christ is to us both when we first behold Him as Redeemer and subsequently as a fuller insight is granted to us about the glory of His person comes only through the Holy Spirit, Dale said,

To all men the great objects of faith are revealed by the Spirit of God. No man can really say that Jesus is the Lord but in the Holy Spirit.¹

In this connection, what is probably Dr. Moberly's most weighty criticism of Dale's presentation is his apparent failure to develop the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in relation to the application of the Atonement in human experience,

He stops short of Pentecost; and short of Pentecost tries to show how I am included in the 'forgiveness' of God. But short of Pentecost 'I' am not so included ... The critical point, then, after all, is Dr. Dale's omission.²

The critical illustration of this for Dr. Moberly is in Dale's discussion of the Epistle to the Romans in The Atonement where Dale stops short of the eighth chapter. But this much can be said in defence of Dale, though Dr. Moberly's criticism in general is valid: in the body of the book, which is devoted to a demonstration of the fact of the Atonement, he does not require a discussion of the application of it at that point. However, it is doubtful if even there the importance of the Holy Spirit's ministry can be missed entirely.³ It will be recalled how Dale insisted that the objective without the subjective element of the Atonement leaves the theory in the air. The principles he enunciates are sufficiently numerous and clear to

¹Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 102-103. cf. Christian Doctrine, p. 131 ff, 142-147, 161-162. On p. 143-144 he wrote, "The manifestation of God in Christ is a divine appeal to our faith and reverence and submission; it is not in our own strength that we answer it, but in the power of a divine Person who enables us to approach God in Christ, even as in Christ God has approached us".

²R. C. Moberly, Op. Cit., p. 394.

³"The power of the Spirit of God is with us, and He, in wonderful ways, finds direct access to the innermost life of man, piercing through intellectual difficulties and antagonisms which seemed to create invincible obstacles to the Truth", p. 32; and, when discussing Romans chapter five, he said, "This manifestation of the love of God, which makes the hope of escaping His wrath so confident, is accomplished by the power of the Holy Ghost, who illuminates for us the transcendent expression of Divine mercy in the Death of Christ", p. 240.

provide an adequate foundation for the superstructure of a fully developed doctrine. But the subject does require further development from the other writings of Dale, notably Christian Doctrine which he published some years after The Atonement.

The giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, said Denney, was a proof in the realm of experience that sin was overcome by Christ's work and that the divine life is within the reach of men. It was the Holy Spirit who turned memory into faith in the disciples' experience. And it is the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring home to men the significance of who Christ is and what He did.¹ A key idea in Denney's theology is that "faith" and "spirit" for the Christian are correlative terms and that they describe the Godward and manward actions in achieving redemption.² He maintains that the Spirit for the early Church designated both a person (for they could conceive of only God doing what the Spirit did) and a power, a divine power upon them enabling them to apprehend the significance of the redeeming act of God in Christ. What the Spirit does, he said when commenting on Romans 5:5, is to fill the Christian heart "with an exultant assurance of the love of God. The man who has such an assurance -- the man whose heart is full to overflowing with the sense of that love ... is full of the Holy Ghost".³ Forsyth, too, throughout his career declared that the Holy Spirit has direct access to the lives of men disclosing to them the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.⁴ By the Spirit the Christian means more than the divine presence in the world; he means "God's presence in the church in an Eternal Son and a Holy Spirit Who not only fills the Word but mediates it to the soul".⁵

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 156-161. cf. The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 126.

²Denney, "Holy Spirit", Op. Cit., p. 738.

³Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 309.

⁴Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 146; Missions In State And Church, p. 62; The Work Of Christ, p. 19.

⁵Forsyth, Faith, Freedom, And The Future, p. 1. Note p. 11-15.

We must face the fact therefore that the revelation of Christ to the soul as its redeemer and the redeemer of the world is an act of God. Faith, said Dale, is a revelation of God to the soul about what He has done in Christ; it is human response to a divine word mediated through the various channels that comprise the world of our experience, and the intrusion into our lives is recognized for what it is, namely, an act of God. After describing various influences in a man's life which lead him to a deeper experience of faith Dale defines it in the following, and it should be noticed that this is drawn from one of his later, important books,

Then follows the great venture of faith. A cry goes up to God from the very depths of the soul; a cry not of despair, but of faltering trust and hope, for it is the answer to a 'Divine Word' which came to men through prophets or apostles, or the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and has been interpreted, to generation after generation, in the sorrows and joys of penitents, in the righteousness and blessedness of saints. The cry is answered; sometimes with startling suddenness; sometimes, as it seems, after long delay. But whether earlier or later, the answer comes; and the man knows that it comes from the Living God.¹

"It is only", wrote Denney, "through a revelation of God, and especially of what God is in relation to sin, that repentance can be evoked in the soul".² Our faith in Christ is in response to the divine power interpenetrating and redeeming human life; the Gospel is the divine power which overcomes the resistance of men.³ An important way in which Denney expresses this is in his insistence that the omniscience of God is not a static attribute, but a divine action; "it is God through His searching knowledge of us entering with power into our lives".⁴ In Christ God has made the revelation of the ultimate reality and power in the world which is His sin-bearing love, and

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 37. cf. The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 22; The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 42-43, 225; The Atonement, p. 31.

²Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 89.

³Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 348; The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 294-296.

⁴Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 2. cf. p. 34-35.

faith is our response to this love in staking our lives upon it.¹ God, wrote Forsyth, is free to act and in revelation His activity extends to the soul creating the response of faith.² In Christianity, he said, everything turns on the nature of revelation being divine act working a decisive change in the soul. Christ is both the source and authority of Christian experience,

He is realised in your faith as its effective cause and permanent reality. That is the very definition of faith. He is not only objective there, He is initiative. He is known not simply in the experience, but as the creator of the experience.³

Our faith as a living faith, he wrote, "is the Supreme Gift of God in man, because it is the response evoked by His supreme revelation and gift of Himself to man as Father, Son, and King".⁴

It follows from this that true faith for Dale, Denney and Forsyth goes beyond mere credal assent, to the category of personal relations between the soul and God. In fact, as we have shown already, credal statements follow only from what the church has experienced of Christ. Dale wrote that an abstract creed must be "rooted in the experience of the heart as well as in the logic of the intellect, if it is to remain firm and strong".⁵ There is, he said, saving truth only in the sense of the seed of the Word of God which is planted by various ways through the spread of the Gospel and brought to fruition by the Holy Spirit, but not in the sense of abstract truth. We are saved by the living God in a personal relationship.⁶ Denney said that

¹Ibid., p. 260-266.

²Forsyth, This Life And The Next, p. 14.

³Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 68. Note p. 344, "we have to be saved into faith before we are saved by it". cf. The Atonement In Modern Religious Thought, p. 80; Rome, Reform And Reaction, p. 123-125; "we have a central, fontal, constitutive act of God, creating faith by its very nature as a corresponding reaction to it in man", The Principle Of Authority, p. 57, and p. 117, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 230.

⁴Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 9.

⁵Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 232-233. cf. The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 182-183.

⁶Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 206-224. cf. The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 266-267.

post-Reformation theology was weighed down with too much apparatus and too little personality; faith in a living person had been displaced by faith in theological formulae. Thus "clear views of truth", as they were called, came between the souls of men and Christ.¹ No credal statement -- not even a developed doctrine of the Atonement² -- can be the condition of man's faith; this can be measured only by the sincerity of his surrender to what God has revealed to him. And Forsyth declared that "orthodoxy means intellectualism";³ dogma does not create faith, he said, it expresses faith. But the faith can be evoked or created only by the personal action of God,

Nothing can create faith but God's actual coming in Son or Spirit, His actual contact and action in a soul.⁴

This confrontation by God of man and by man of God means that through the Spirit of God we are brought into personal relation with God in Jesus Christ. We have to do, therefore, with the crucified, risen, and ascended Christ; it is Christ alive, and present, who by His Spirit comes to us. No point is of greater significance for the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth than their insistence that Christ is alive and active redeeming the world in accordance with His own ideal of goodness and by means of His finished work on the Cross. It will be recalled that the dominant influence in Dale's own spiritual experience was A. J. Morris's sermon on the living Christ. God is revealed in Christ to us as the living God, he said; "the historic Christ is the Object of Memory; the present, the living Christ is the Object

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 109-110. cf. p. 300.

²Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 407.

³Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 397.

⁴Forsyth, Theology In Church And State, p. 13-14. cf. p. 51; "Revelation And The Person Of Christ", Op. Cit., p. 134-137; Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 44. "What saved the Reformation religiously was the rise of Pietism, which rescued faith both from the politicians and the theologians", The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 21.

of Faith, the Source of Power, the Inspiration of Love, the Author of Salvation".¹ What the Christian verifies, he wrote, is not a body of truths -- these follow on his certainty of the living Christ -- but the present power and grace of Christ Himself.² Denney declares that "there can be no salvation from sin unless there is a living Saviour",³ and, that "there is no such thing as preaching Christ unless it is the preaching of One who lives and reigns".⁴ The power of the Atonement to save us from sin derives, he wrote, not simply from the recognition of a past historical event -- the death of Christ -- but from the Lord Himself who appeals to us now by His Spirit in the power of that death.⁵ In the sermon which is said to mark a theological transition in the career of Forsyth it is clear that the dominant note struck was the power of the present, living Christ.⁶ Christ by His

¹Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 49. Note the following: "The Christian Atonement is a fact, accomplished once for all, a part of the history of God and the universe; but the pardon which is based upon it, and which is promised to those who confess and forsake their sins is the present act of the Living God. The renewal of our nature is effected not by the natural influence of divine revelations made in remote lands and remote ages, it is the present act in every case of the Spirit of the Living God. In want and trouble we find consolation not merely in the pleasant and soothing sound of loving promises given in days gone by, but in the conviction that those promises will now be fulfilled by the will and act of the Living God. As the affections of our higher nature increase in vigour and intensity, it is not enough to tell us how God appeared in time past to our fathers, we thirst for direct and conscious communion with Him now, our heart and our flesh cry out for the Living God; and the supreme yearning of our souls would be unsatisfied were it not true, that the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, has purged our spiritual consciousness from dead works, that we, and all generations of His people, may offer priestly service in the very holy of holies to the Living God", The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 16-17.

²Dale, The Living Christ And The Four Gospels, p. 66. cf. The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 183-185; Protestantism: Its Ultimate Principle, p. 35-38.

³Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 123.

⁴Denney, "Preaching Christ", Op. Cit., p. 394.

⁵Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 112. cf. Jesus And The Gospel, p. 239; The Primary Marks Of Christianity, p. 84 ff; The Literal Interpretation Of The Sermon On The Mount, p. 30; Letters Of Principal James Denney To W. Robertson Nicoll, p. xvi-xvii.

⁶Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 114, 119.

Word and Spirit is not only an historic fact, but a present living person with whom we come into direct fellowship,

By being thus integral with its Word, in an economy of the Spirit, this fact of Christ is differentiated from all other history. Only the Lord the Spirit, by the Word of the Gospel, makes the person of Christ so near as to be the ever-present revelation and ever-creative redemption by God. The revelation which came to mankind in Christ, i.e., the real, intimate, ageless act of God, comes to each man as Christ comes to him in the Holy Ghost. The historic fact of revelation that we are taught becomes the Word of revelation that we hear. Such is the Christian experience.¹

But how are we to conceive of this relation? It is clear that this question brings us to the heart of what Dale, Denney, and Forsyth say is the highest form of Christian experience. But in the nature of the case it is not easy either for them to set forward in words the precise definition of this personal relation nor for those who read them to elucidate their meaning. However, certain facts are clear, and to these we now turn. The aim of our discussion will be to set forward at this point an account of what each in turn says this experience is, reserving certain questions and problems that arise for discussion to the final section of this chapter.

Faith in Christ, said Dale, involves the confession that Christ's death atoned for sin, and that nothing from man whether penitence or amendment, self-torture or deeds of righteousness, are necessary to make the Atonement complete. We are called to rely upon God not as upon certain promises which comprise a formal treaty, but to go to Him with unstinted confidence; to believe that all His promises are more appeals to our faith than bonds of His fidelity.² There is a direct relation between every man and Christ; nothing may stand finally between us and Him.³ It is a personal, moral act of faith in God, of faith in Christ as the Son of God and our redeemer and Lord,

¹Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 116. cf. p. 59-61; "The Distinctive Thing In Christian Experience", Hibbert Journal, Vol. VI, 1908, p. 481-499.

²Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 27-28; The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 237.

³Dale, Christ And The Controversies Of Christendom, p. 13-14; A Manual Of Congregational Principles, p. 22; Fellowship With Christ, p. 307, 311.

Against all speculative difficulties can you elect to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the Saviour of men, the Lord of your life, the source of moral and spiritual strength, the ideal of your perfection. Believe in the God of whom Christ speaks. Believe in Christ Himself. Believe as you believe in a friend in whose integrity strangers have lost confidence, but of whose innocence of the charge brought against him you are assured.¹

But the value of this faith does not depend upon our apprehension of the theological connection between the death of Christ and our sin; rather its value lies in our utter dependence upon or confidence in the act of Christ which we perceive to be the redeeming act of God for us sinners. The explanation, or theory by means of which we aim to enlarge the fact rationally, will follow, logically.²

Denney employs a variety of forms to express the same idea. The essence of Christian experience, he says, is to know the exalted, living Christ now,

Not an accidental acquaintance with Him as He lived in Galilee or Jerusalem, but a spiritual fellowship with Him as He reigns in the heavenly places, makes a Christian.³

Our faith, he wrote, depends not only upon what He was but upon what He is. Each individual believer is involved in a direct relation to Him, not simply as an appropriation of His ideas, but a devotion to His person.⁴ Faith, he says, always has its object here and now; thus the Christian religion is the "religion of men who believe that Christ lives and reigns in grace, and that they themselves are in living fellowship with a living Lord, who does all things perfectly in them and for them".⁵ Reconciled lives mediate the reconciling power of Christ's redeeming work, said Denney, and it is the Spirit who unites our lives with His,

¹Dale, Christ And The Future Life, p. 28-29.

²Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 230-231; The Atonement, p. 17-18.

³Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 303.

⁴Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 24.

⁵Ibid., p. 152. cf. p. 153 ff; Jesus And The Gospel, p. 12-13, 99 ff, 375, 392-393; "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", Op. Cit., p. 669, 671.

The living spirit of God makes Him present and eternal; and it is not from Palestine, or from the first century of the Christian era, but here and now that His reconciling power is felt.¹

Will can commune only with will, wrote Forsyth, and heart with heart; the relation God and man have to each other at the highest must be personal.² He defines faith as "personal trust in a personal Saviour";³ and in the same context he says that faith means that our inchoate personalities bow to something more personal than ourselves through whom we come to ourselves. As Christians we receive Christ the Word of God who is the creative object or content of our faith,

For personal and final union with the Father and His love there is no way for us but that faith in Jesus which His disciples found forced upon them by the compulsion of his grace ... Jesus was for the Apostles and their Churches not the consummation of a God-consciousness, labouring up through creation, but the invasive source of forgiveness, new creation, and eternal life.⁴

What all three stress in particular is that Christ is given not for the sake of, but to our faith; and, that faith is salvation not just a means to it. Christ by His Spirit entering our experience is both the object and creator of our faith. We are aware that the one who intrudes and who does His work is divine. Forsyth says,

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 9. cf. p. 10, 163-164, 166. On p. 291 he wrote that "the deepest thing we can ever know about God is that there is love in Him which bears in all its reality the sin of the world. It is not simply the act of an instant, it is the attitude of a life; it is the one right thing at the moment when a man abandons himself to Christ, and it is the one thing which keeps him right with God forever".

²Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 138-139. On p. 146 he said, "He must be personal to us. He must be our Saviour, in our situation, our needs, loves, shames, sins. He must charge Himself with our souls. We believe in the Holy Ghost. We have in Christ as the Spirit the Sanctifier of our single lives, the Revealer of our hearts, the Helper of our most private straits, the Inspirer of our most deep and sacred confessions".

³Forsyth, Rome, Reform And Reaction, p. 50. cf. p. 65.

⁴Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 58. cf. Rome, Reform And Reaction, p. 209; The Principle Of Authority, p. 334, "we make a personal surrender of ourselves to a real creative object".

And it is to our faith the grace is given, yet not because of our faith, which is not more perfect than our repentance. It is to nothing so poor as our faith or our repentance that new life is given, but only to Christ on His Cross, and to us for His sake who is the Creator and Fashioner of both. Our justification rests on this atoning creative Christ alone.¹

The problems raised by such language and ideas as we have noted cannot be minimized. However, before a more detailed consideration is given to these, two points may be made here.

First, what has been stressed throughout this study needs to be borne in mind, namely, that the purpose of God is to win us into fellowship with Himself and that this purpose is realized in the realm of moral, personal, and teleological categories. Confrontation with Christ is a moral reality; it is another way of describing our union with Him through His finished work. For example, when discussing the doctrine of justification Dale said that by faith a man's life is rooted in the life of Christ and hence it is voluntarily submitted to Christ's authority. What this means is that faith is the guarantee that ultimately a perfect personal righteousness will be achieved according to the redemptive purpose of God. In this we note these three primary elements: the moral, the personal, and the teleological. For example,

But in any intelligent and complete statement of the Christian Gospel His moral supremacy is explicitly asserted, and the faith which relies upon Him for the pardon of sin receives from His lips the law of righteousness and the strength to keep the law.²

When we are confronted with the person of Christ, wrote Denney, we sense that His call to men is not simply of historical interest, but that it is coming to us now, directly; and, to feel this is "to be brought face to face with the supreme moral responsibility".³ What is forgotten in Protestant theology sometimes, he wrote, is that the apostolic assurance of the personal presence of

¹Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 195. cf. The Principle Of Authority, p. 39.

²Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 146. Note p. 144-148.

³Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 239.

Christ in their lives and amongst them by the Spirit meant that a new moral power had come to them; the great matter, he says, "is not the distinction of justification and sanctification, but their connection, and that justification or reconciliation is a delusion unless the life of the reconciled and justified is inevitably and naturally a holy life".¹ Years before, when commenting on the new creation in Christ of Second Corinthians chapter five, Denney had said that it is both ideally an accomplished fact because of our union by faith with Christ and an actual process of growth into Christ. Faith both puts us into a new relation to Christ and is a task,

We are in Him the moment faith touches Him, but we have to grow up into Him in all things. Only as we do so does the world change all around us, till the promise is fulfilled of new heavens and a new earth.²

In Christ we are confronted with the supreme moral reality of the world, wrote Forsyth; "Christ does not impress us with a new sense of God, but God in Christ creates us anew".³ Faith is the soul acting to fix itself upon the supreme moral reality of the divine redemptive act in Christ. The soul can find moral reality only in a person. Faith in Christ is life's creative power, he said. We may set aside certain points once thought essential on both Church and Bible, "but the personal rule over us of Christ, our personal committal of our soul to Him with all its powers, and our personal communion with Him, is the condition of a moral manhood as fine as genius or taste".⁴ The moral quality of this union involves for us not a static quality of being, but a call to share in the blessings and responsibilities of His saving work,

We are saved, men and peoples, as we enter on that righteousness; and this we do by a faith which is really a union with Him, the Faithful to death. This union is not mystic and rapt chiefly, but moral, a union not with His static person but with His dynamic work and His soul outpoured.⁵

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 297.

²Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 207-208.

³Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 55. cf. p. 197.

⁴Forsyth, Christ On Parnassus, p. 288.

⁵Forsyth, The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 187. cf. This Life And The Next, p. 106; The Justification Of God, p. 19, 64.

Second, a point emerges here which is a problem implicit not only in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, but of Christian theology generally. The popular way of setting out the doctrine of salvation is to say that men are saved by being brought to God through faith in Christ and through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. With the truth and accuracy of this statement there can be no dispute. However, there is a tendency, often, if not in theory then in practice in the practical work of evangelism, to divide the Trinity unduly instead of stressing the unity of the Godhead in achieving redemption. While Dale, Denney, and Forsyth protested strongly against the transactional theories of the Atonement which divided the Trinity, it seems that they did not fully overcome the same problem, cast in slightly different form, in connection with the faith-relationship of the Christian believer. What the objective theory of the Atonement means, as we have shown, is that the Atonement is an act of God -- of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- working for the redemption of His world from evil and sin; thus what ought to be stressed is that men are brought into relation with the living God in Christ. Christ is not merely a means to a desirable end; He with the Father and the Spirit is the end Himself -- though this is not to minimize the fact that He is the Mediator.

It is doubtful if this problem can finally be solved, for it appears to touch on what Dr. Hodgson calls the fundamental problem of human experience, namely, the relation of the finite to the infinite, of time to eternity.¹ How are we to conceive of God as infinite, yet as entering history and capable of our trust and fellowship? The solution, it seems, may be found along the lines which have been stressed throughout these theories thus far, that is, in the personal will of the Creator who limits his own freedom to create ours,

¹"Once again we are brought face to face with the fundamental problem confronting all human thought. How are we to make sense of the universe of our experience? We have first to postulate its creation by God, and then to acknowledge the antinomy between the impassibility of God-in-Himself and the passibility of God-in-relation-to-creation", For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 78-79. cf. p. 41, 67, 87; and, I, p. 128, 223.

and draws us to Himself in that freedom so that we share His communion and work. Thus God manifest in Christ and revealed to us by His Spirit discloses Him both as means and end, both as passible and impassible, both as entering history and as eternal. This is the crux of the divine self-revelation and of our apprehension of who and what God is to us in creation, providence, and redemption as we ponder on the kind of world God wishes to create.

But even here it is possible to trace strong lines of the solution in the writings of all three. Throughout, their dominant theme has been that through the Atonement and in Christ men are brought into a new relation to God; that is, men are called upon to throw themselves without reserve upon God in Christ. When we have believed in Christ we have believed in God. Dale said that in Christ men know God and they know His personally.¹ The problem we have referred to receives striking attention in the following quotation, though that Dale was consciously aware of it is doubtful. But that the truth of the Christian faith is epitomized by both the expressions "access to God through Christ" at the beginning of the quotation, and "approach God in Him" at the end is clear,

For that final access to God through Christ we are prepared by access to God through Christ during our earthly years. This was the experience of the apostles, and it has been the experience of Christian men in all later generations. It is by living the life that Christ lived, and by living it in the power of union with Christ, that we find God. It is in the power of His trust that we trust in the Father; in the power of His love that we love the Father; in the power of His obedience that we obey the Father. We approach God in Him.²

Denney and Forsyth seem more overtly aware of this problem, probably due to the fact that so much of idealist philosophy which had at this time invaded theology tended to deny the reality or to minimize the importance of the historical. Thus Denney says that "the very meaning of the Incarnation, the

¹Dale, The Living Christ And The Four Gospels, p. 16.

²Dale, Christian Theology, p. 267.

truth on which all Christianity depends, is precisely this, that there is a point, viz., the life of the Son of God in our nature, at which the spiritual and the historical coincide".¹ In Christ, he says, we are brought to God and a new relationship enabling goodness; faith is abandonment to God.² In Christ, "we are in contact with the eternal truth and being of God".³ It is the one divine causality which -- as Father, Son, and Spirit -- confronts the world, and works in unison for the world's redemption, he declared.⁴ It will be recalled that Forsyth stressed this point when he said that "the Father who spoke by the prophets must come to save in the Son and must occupy in the Spirit. He offers, gives, Himself in the Son and conveys Himself in the Spirit".⁵ God both gives Himself for our redemption and to our faith; He is the object of our faith, "faith is our response with our whole selves to God's absolute gift of Himself".⁶

(B) With reference to the character of personal faith in these theories two factors need to be borne in mind: first, that God employs the events of human life as media of revelation; and second, that the Christian's personal experience of Christ is authoritative. Dale said that when spiritual truth appears in the context of human experience, "it has to become incarnate, and must accept the infirmities of the human medium through which alone it can reveal itself to mankind".⁷ There are two sides to the development of the

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 207. cf. The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 4-5; "Preaching Christ", Op. Cit., p. 403.

²Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", Op. Cit., p. 616, 622.

³Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 35. cf. p. 255, 300.

⁴Denney, "Holy Spirit", Op. Cit., p. 744. cf. The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 88-89.

⁵Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 327. cf. The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 101.

⁶Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 316. cf. p. 149, 324. On p. 259 he wrote, "God gave Himself ... the Holy One is Redeemer".

⁷Dale, The Atonement, p.188.

doctrine of the Trinity as an article of faith, wrote Denney. First there was the historical side -- the actual manifestation of God in Christ -- and second, the actual reception of divine life by men through the Holy Spirit. When faith, he said, departs from these grounds "it ceases to possess either significance or authority".¹ In fact, all three writers declare that occasions may arise when we reject the authority of councils and churches in favour of the experience of saints. The vindication of the gospel, finally, is the experience of it.²

But this is not to minimize the objective element in faith in favour of the subjective. Both are true. They are distinct but complementary aspects of the total relation man sustains to God through the Atonement; though, as Dr. Hodgson says, we must learn to distinguish them. Dale, Denney, and Forsyth share Dr. Hodgson's conviction that what is important in faith is its objective content without minimizing the importance of the subjective element. The objective content of faith is the revelation of God in Christ and that final redemptive act by which we are won to Him. Dr. Hodgson says,

The specifically Christian element in our faith is the belief that somehow or other, as objective fact, it is through what Christ has done that this forgiveness and reconciliation are available, ready and waiting for all who repent.³

It will be recalled that Dale's primary criticism of the earlier evangelicalism was that it stressed the act of faith so much that the inquirer was likely to be diverted from the object of faith. When recounting his own spiritual history and difficulty at this point he says,

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 71. cf. Jesus And The Gospel, p. 15, 133-134.

²"But we listen with reverence to the saints of all Churches when they speak concerning those great things which may be actually verified in the saintly life", Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 104. cf. Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 8-9, 18-19; Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 21, 122.

³Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 75. cf. p. 133; I, p. 95-99.

At last, how I cannot tell -- it 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.¹

We are brought, said Denney, into direct relation with Him.² He is careful to add that we cannot demand our experience, nor a similar experience, of others; rather, we ought to accept as genuine all experiences that Christ inspires and which bring men to Him,

In grace there is the infinite variety which living nature itself presents; and the way of perfection is not to reduce all genuine Christianity to what we think the true pattern, but to trust and recognize as genuinely Christian all experiences which men owe to Christ.³

Our experience, wrote Forsyth, is the organ not the basis of faith; the content or body of faith is supremely important not the act,

The experimental religion of true faith is not based on experience, but on revelation and faith. It is realised by experience, it proceeds in experience; but it does not proceed from experience. Experience is its organ, but not its measure, not its principle. What we experience we possess, but faith is our relation not to what we possess but to what possesses us.

Our faith is not in our experience, but in our Saviour.⁴

Dr. Hodgson has pointed out that at any point in our earthly life the relation between God and ourselves can be of two kinds: onesidedly personal, as pictured in the analogy of the potter and his clay, and mutually personal. Thus, in so far as our behaviour is sub-personal, it is onesidedly personal: personal on His side, impersonal on ours. But in so far as we are capable of personal response it can be, and often is, mutually personal.⁵ This is

¹Dale, The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 265. cf. The Life And Letters Of J. A. James, p. 300-304.

²Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 24.

³Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 275. cf. p. 34-35.

⁴Forsyth, Christian Perfection, p. 28. cf. The Principle Of Authority, p. 178, 386; and, "Christ And The Christian Principle", Op. Cit., p. 152. He says, "religion must be not only subjectively sincere but objectively real. That is to say it must rest on a real objective, and one possessing the initiative to which faith responds".

⁵Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 155-156.

the point which underlies the position taken by these men. As we noted earlier in Forsyth, our response is to someone more personal than ourselves; to one who desires to fashion in us the image of His own perfection. Therefore, to speak of a personal relation to Christ in faith is to express the essence of what Christianity aims at, provided that what stands behind the conception is not the idea of a static "saved position", but the idea of being brought into union with Christ so that continuing growth, development and insight are ours, and a share in His work of redeeming the world.

A significant aspect of Christian experience for Dale, Denney, and Forsyth is its self-authenticating character to which brief reference must now be made. It is what Dr. Hodgson calls the inner conviction that the followers of our Lord and subsequent Christians have had that they possess a new kind of life because of their new, creative relation to Christ,

The New Testament is written by men who use different metaphors and images to testify to their conviction that they are enjoying a new kind of life: they have been 'born again', they are 'in Christ', they are 'members of the body of Christ'. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are put away, behold, all things are become new'. Whatever they may have thought about it, the evidence seems to me to show that the meaning of the newness of which they were conscious was that they had been taken by Christ to share in His outlook and His way of life.¹

It is by the Holy Spirit that our relation to Christ and Christ's presence in us is assured, wrote Dale; we enter personally into sonship through Christ where the divinity of Christ is vouchsafed to us,

Under the illumination of the Holy Spirit and as the result of the experiences of the Christian life, Christian men in one generation after another see for themselves the glory of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.²

Denney makes frequent reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit who validates the reality of the Christian's personal relation to Christ. The

¹Ibid., p. 104.

²Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 103. cf. p. 305-308; Fellowship With Christ, p. 238; The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 247.

Holy Spirit by and with the word in our hearts gives us full assurance of the revelation of God in Christ; the authority of the Gospel is such that it imposes itself -- it can freely win the recognition and surrender of the mind and heart of man; the simplest Christian spirit through the anointing of the Holy One knows instinctively whether or not that which it holds dear is the message it hears; there is, he says, a self-guaranteeing power in the inner life of Jesus which assures us we are in contact with reality in the gospels.¹ We all confront the same Christ and therefore share the same religion, but much is left to the conscience of each individual, he wrote, in resolving problems attendant upon faith in Christ,

We can all have, with a clear intellectual conscience, the same religion ... the religion in which we recognize Him as the only Son of God, our Lord and Saviour: we can all have the same religion -- provided that the free intellectual questions it raises are left for the free consideration of Christian intelligence. We cannot lift the answers to these questions ready made, from any source; not even from the New Testament. The mind which asks them is the only one that can answer them; and if it cannot answer them for itself, they remain for it unanswerable.²

Thus, the Apostles are not our authority, finally, but they help us by inspiring in us an intellectual interest in the Gospel answering to their own and aiding us in our quest to discover the full meaning of the redeeming act of God in Christ.

Forsyth, too, affirms the self-authenticating character of faith in Christ. The divine authority, he said, must be inward, personal, and moral; and this authority of the redeemer in us is the final authority of Christianity,

I mean His authority in the true region where the word authority has its ultimate meaning, in the region of personal interaction, in the moral, the religious region alone, the region where grace acts and faith answers, the evangelical region and not the theological.³

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 207, 221-223; "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", p. 626; The Death Of Christ, p. 284.

²Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 408. cf. p. 378, 409.

³Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 58.

Our sense of assurance is the issue of a Spirit-enlightened conscience so that our certainty is simply a part of God's own, he said,

The most real is the new creative, the redemptive; so that our last footing, which must be in the metaphysic of ethic and action, is in the central moral act of Humanity, in the historic objective of Christ's Cross.¹

Our true certainty is a certainty of the soul through the Holy Spirit at first hand; it is the question, he declared, not of orthodoxy but of the Holy Spirit, of moral regeneration, and of power to keep a Church -- not as a sect round a doctrine or as a group round an orator -- but as a Church.² Faith is response to revelation, i.e., the object of faith revealing itself directly to faith; this is the final authority of Christianity,

our only authority must be faith's object itself in some direct self-revelation of it ... in the last resort, therefore, the only religious authority must be some action of God's creative self-revelation, and not simply an outside witness to it.³

What this discussion leads up to is that whatever in experience and in the accidents of our environment were the grounds of faith, once faith in Christ is ours its ground is in itself -- or rather, in the One who is its object. When a man believes, the object of his faith is the living God, and his conviction of the reality of this relationship is unshakeable. It is a reaffirmation of the principle noted earlier, namely, that faith is not merely a means to salvation, it is salvation; it is certainty.⁴ The

¹Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 196-197. cf. p. 77-84.

²Forsyth, Positive Preaching And The Modern Mind, p. 179; The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 21-23, 116; The Principle Of Authority, p. 129-135; The Church And The Sacraments, p. 16-25.

³Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 20. cf. p. 75.

⁴cf. Dale who when writing about Christians who retained their faith in the face of problems raised by science and criticism said, "whatever may have been the original grounds of their faith, their faith has been verified in their own personal experience", The Living Christ And The Four Gospels, p. 10.

most comprehensive way of expressing this is to say that the whole of life takes on a new perspective; the Christian achieves a unity of experience and knowledge in what can be designated the integrated life -- the life brought into fellowship with God. Denney urges us to be careful about claiming that in Christ we know everything; but he declares that our assurance of the redeeming love of God in Christ must be related to all we know. Thus, all our knowledge "must have something of revelation in it, and must contribute to our theology".¹ The strength of our faith, wrote Forsyth, is the conviction that God has made life out of our shipwreck; certitude is not the absence of contradiction in our views, but with ourselves. Our faith is in a "world-Redeemer" but we do not claim now to see the final integration; we believe that God is working toward it and that he will finally achieve it,

Here again it comes home to us that the organ for the last reality is not sight but faith, not even the insight of genius and culture but evangelical faith -- trust in the new Creator. We are real not as we are integrated into the moral world, but into that world's Redemption.²

III

Despite the warnings and qualifications with which these theologians hedge their views about, it is not easy to escape the problems that are implicit in their position on the personal, inner character of Christian faith, though in fairness it needs to be remembered that the ideal of any theological position may be abused or brought into disrepute. Undesirable

¹Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 7. cf. Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 170.

²Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 188. cf. p. 50; Holy Christian Empire, p. 42-43; Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, I, p. 105. In volume II, p. 45-46 Dr. Hodgson writes, "What God has done in Christ stands for ever as the enduring depositum fidei of the revelation. Our understanding of it grows as we learn to discount the miscolourings of our predecessors, leaving it to those who shall follow us to discount our own. We shall find reason to think that we in our time, after nearly two thousand years of Christian history, may be only beginning to know what Christianity really is".

elements may easily -- indeed frequently have -- crept in to the preaching of the Gospel where the dominant theme is personal confrontation of Christ. On the one hand the emotional problems are serious -- "experience seeking" is a common fault -- while on the other, overconfidence, or a sense of static certainty, may well inhibit proper Christian growth and discourage sacrificial concern for others. But beyond the psychological problems involved in this, certain important theological questions arise. Some of these are insoluble at the present stage of our knowledge and may well remain so for a long time yet -- if ever they can be solved -- but they need to be raised nonetheless.

1. The first important question is the status of the world's unreached millions -- past, present, and future -- in the light of this emphasis on conscious, personal, or assured faith. Dale, Denney, and Forsyth refuse to relegate them glibly to perdition as so many of their theological forefathers did, nor do they adopt the solution offered by universalism. In fact, while they strove to encourage a richer, fuller, more joyous and assured faith in the lives of their people, they refused to make this the final criterion of salvation. The Cross for them harboured the saving grace of God in such measure that they leave the unreached to the providence and grace of God. Dale declared that God does pity the heathen in their darkness, suffering and bondage; He does love all men alike. But in His wisdom He has fashioned the world in such a way as to develop in men their freedom and sense of responsibility; thus He does not override the principle of interdependence in reaching mankind with the Christian message. Here a great burden of responsibility rests upon the Church.¹ We must leave the unreached in God's hands, wrote Denney; whatever their future is and how it is related to their present life we simply cannot tell, he said, but our responsibility to them is great,

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 30-35; The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 195-196; Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 69-70.

whatever it may mean to them in the future not to have heard it while they lived -- a question to which we can give no answer whatever -- it is certainly a grave sin in us if we have it and keep it to ourselves.¹

God has commanded us, declared Forsyth, to treat all men as salvable -- and they are; when we commit ourselves to God we are able to commit the world confident that Christ's work is at least as great as the world.² Sin, he said, does not destroy the power of God's love; it is not the purpose of God to save an esoteric group out of the world, but the world itself.³

The traditional meanings of terms like reprobation that occupied the attention of so much Protestant theology are rejected by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. What needs to be borne in mind here especially, is that freedom comprises the touchstone of their theories. They maintain that God is creating freedom, therefore a theory which accounts for all the facts must allow freedom both to God and man in creation and redemption. Their rejection of reprobation, absolute predestination, eternal torment, and universalism is parallel to the view advanced by Dr. Hodgson.⁴ Dale acknowledges the sovereignty of God in initiating redemption;⁵ reprobation for him means simply human active rejection of the divine grace;⁶ the divine judgment against evil and sin is sure, but its exact nature is obscure;⁷ election is experiential, i.e., once we have been assured of the divine love we sense ourselves members of an elect race;⁸ universalism does not take sufficient

¹Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 31.

²Forsyth, Holy Christian Empire, p. 43; The Work Of Christ, p. 234; Faith, Freedom, And The Future, p. 277; The Principle Of Authority, p. 29.

³Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 96 ff, 125. cf. The Principle Of Authority, p. 198-207.

⁴Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 201-202.

⁵Dale, The Ordination Services Of The Rev. R. W. Dale, p. 35.

⁶Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 27-28, 40; The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 261; "neither theologically nor politically do we believe in the doctrine of reprobation", The Politics Of The Future; Birmingham: Hudson and Son, 1867, p. 2-3; The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 38-39.

⁷Dale, Nine Lectures On Preaching, p. 214-215.

⁸Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 30-39.

account of the power of human freedom to resist to the end the grace of God;¹ and, he maintained that everlasting suffering is an intolerable concept.²

Denney said that the term election describes our confidence in the grace and power of God who redeems us -- it is understood in experience;³ for him also reprobation signifies human moral insensibility or active rejection of redeeming love not a divine decree;⁴ the divine judgment is sure but speculation on its character is idle;⁵ and dogmatic universalism is unethical because "the very conception of human freedom involves the possibility of its permanent misuse".⁶ Forsyth maintained that absolute predestination is an intolerable doctrine, rather, all men may be said to be elect in Christ because in Him the world is chosen for salvation; election as an idea is valuable religiously or experientially rather than theologically, he said; "the certainty of election is always the certainty of faith", and, "our certainty, security, and peace in the Gospel is not a certainty about such election but our certainty of it and in it. It is not scientific but religious". What Forsyth insists upon constantly, is that election does not constitute a selection to privilege, but a call to growth and for service.⁷ For him, too, reprobation means personal rejection of, and resistance to, divine grace.⁸

¹Ibid., p. 93-94; The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 87-88.

²Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 163.

³Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 40-41, 343-344; St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans, p. 665; The Death Of Christ, p. 89; Factors Of Faith In Immortality, p. 105.

⁴Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 295-296, 336; Studies In Theology, p. 43; "Reprobate", Op. Cit., p. 228; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 164.

⁵Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 185; "Preaching Christ", Op. Cit., p. 397; War And The Fear Of God, p. 27-29; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 227.

⁶Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 255. cf. The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 63, "absolute predestination is not the explanation of anything in the moral world".

⁷Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 345, 356. cf. p. 345-360; and, This Life And The Next, p. 12; The Justification Of God, p. 158-160.

⁸Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 357.

What these questions lead up to is the relation, in Dale, Denney, and Forsyth, of morality to religion, and of what Dr. Hodgson calls saving to justifying faith. Dale, in a sermon devoted to the first of these, pointed out that in so much of evangelistic preaching morality and religion were divided; too much emphasis was laid upon security in the future life so that duties in this life were seldom enforced. The theory, he said, which concludes that goodness and virtue lose their character in men who love not or know not God is destructive of the foundations both of morality and religion. He concludes, "whatever theologians may teach, I will do honour to moral excellence wherever I find it".¹ Virtue, or morality, is a fact of experience apart from revelation and the Bible, he said; and, personal faith is valueless unless it proceeds from a life which has been morally transformed.² It will be recalled how Dale had stressed that God is the support of righteousness in all His creatures,

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 other worlds righteousness is possible.³

Denney says that religion and morality go together and that both depend finally for their value on God, and, in an interesting aside late in life, he said that morality must not be scrapped in favour of religion for we properly keep our feet in the spiritual world only in the tension between the two.⁴ In his earliest published book Denney took the position that

¹Dale, Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 31.

²Dale, The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 44-46, 128 ff, 141; Laws Of Life For The Common Life, p. 295 ff.

³Dale, Atheism And The House Of Commons, p. 5. cf. Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 46-47; The Old Evangelicalism And The New, p. 35-36; noted on p. 145, 194 previously.

⁴Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", Op. Cit., p. 594; "Righteousness (In St. Paul's Teaching)", Op. Cit., p. 787; Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 188.

Christ is life, light, and truth, and that "wherever these exist in the world, confessed or unconfessed, in Greek or Jew, in Buddhist or Brahmin, there Christ is, and life and grace, and God".¹ He never changed his opinion and it seems difficult to suppose that any kind of antagonism or contradiction may be posited in the view of a man who recognizes good in the world wherever he finds it while yet insisting that the final revelation of goodness, truth, and love is in Jesus Christ, who, as God incarnate, came to save the world. Similarly, Forsyth wrote that morality does exist apart from religion, but that finally, in the long view of things, it cannot. They are neither coordinate nor identical, but reciprocal.²

What we are led up to here is a view analogous to that put forward by Dr. Hodgson in which he distinguishes between saving and justifying faith. When describing how he was led to this while wrestling with the meaning of justification by faith Dr. Hodgson says,

I had to begin by distinguishing justification from salvation, keeping this latter word for the final state of the blessed in the life of the world to come, and using justification for the condition of those who in this world are on the right side of the line which divides those who are on the way to salvation from those who are not. Then taking my stand on the prophetic principle to which I have referred above, I concluded that the faith which justifies is that fundamental faith which finds expression in a man's attempting to live up to the best light he has got, whether or not he has ever heard of the Christian gospel.³

The answer to the question "Is it necessary to final salvation for a man to have heard of and responded personally to Christ through the Christian Gospel?" is, therefore, "No". But this is not to minimize the work of Christ; rather to say it is to exalt the Atonement. No Christian theologian can

¹Denney, On Natural Law In The Spiritual World, p. 64.

²Forsyth, Rome, Reform, And Reaction, p. 137; The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 60-63.

³Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, I, p. 108-109. cf. p. 115; II, p. 35.

minimize the seriousness of anyone's action who rejects the message of the Gospel and we have shown that Dale, Denney, and Forsyth do take this seriously; but, at the same time no right-thinking Christian can arbitrarily relegate the vast number of the world's unreached to annihilation or perdition on the sole ground that they have not heard of and therefore not responded to Christ. We have shown that in the Atonement God has come in Christ to save the world from evil and sin, and to maximize goodness. He is the source and support of all goodness in the world and where goodness is found there God is found. Is it not a part of the truth of Christianity that the finished, cosmic work of Christ bears in itself the redemption of all and everything which truly strives after righteousness? And this is not to minimize, but to enhance and enlarge the missionary program of the Church encouraging her to redouble her efforts to save the world from all forms of evil and to bring men into the fellowship of God in Christ. This seems to be the direction in which Dale, Denney, and Forsyth are driven for a solution to the problem. Men need to know Christ, indeed, they need an increasing knowledge of Him as they grow in His fellowship and service; and, as their insight is quickened they will see that the ways in which the Cross is relevant in the redeeming purposes of God to the salvation of the world are multifarious.

Dale, when writing of Melchisedec, expressed the opinion that fragments of the divine revelation have filtered down through the history of the race and reached multitudes of souls who have professed a humble reverence for an almost unknown God. These are they who,

loving the light that reached them, faint as the light was, shall not enter into condemnation; and that so, from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south, out of nominally heathen lands, many shall come and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.¹

¹ Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 152.

In a sermon on the theology of John Wesley which is fascinating because it appears to raise the distinction between saving and justifying faith in the form developed by Dr. Hodgson, Dale asks the question, "If faith is the condition precedent of salvation, how can it be a belief that we are saved already?"¹ He points out that early in his career Wesley appeared to make faith the condition precedent of salvation, but that later in life he changed the emphasis to make faith the recognition that we are already forgiven. This he did by distinguishing the two terms 'servant' and 'son', and Wesley complained that his preachers were not sufficiently appraised of the distinction. The former signifies that a man has a conviction of God, or that he is in the service of righteousness in which any man may engage in response to what he believes to be true and good, and for which he is accepted by God and no longer under wrath; whereas, in the case of the latter, when a man hears of Christ and responds to Him he properly becomes a son in fellowship with God. Thus, says Dale, when men who strive after righteousness finally do learn of and respond to Christ, what they find is not One who has been far removed from them, but One who, till then has been the very ground of their being, the very root of their life.²

We have taken account of Denney's opinion that we do not know to what extent the future of the unreached is affected because they have not heard of Christ; but he also affirms that no one can say God has never spoken to him. Thus, our response must be judged in terms of this broader outlook.³ To the question whether all must be born again Denney replied that we neither can answer it nor are we required to; rather, we must be content to leave all souls in God's hands.⁴ He urged that for no man -- no matter how

¹Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 233-235.

²Ibid., p. 236.

³Denney, The Way Everlasting, p. 31, 35.

⁴Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. 111.

intransigent he appears -- may we limit the power of God or the possibility of change.¹ In a discussion on the text "are there few that be saved?" Denney urged that it is foolish when asked from the head, but that the heart is capable of giving it the tenderness and anxiety which must accompany its asking. When we ask it in love we are entitled to believe, he said, that God has among the forces working for redemption some that are unknown to us and that only produce their effect in the world unseen. There is no list published, he declared, of the citizens of heaven, as there is of those who possess the franchise here. In fact, he adds, "hard as it is to enter into life, many will be there whom men in general did not think to see".²

If there are chances in the next life they would be by way of Christ, wrote Forsyth. Those who have never had the Gospel will not be judged on the same footing as those who have; and, it may well be that the unreached may then have their chance. The divine revelation and redemption, he said, are too often treated as "the divine arcanum of a Church instead of the moral key to the whole of history, and the regeneration of the whole of humanity".³ In a lengthy passage on the subject he urges that we trust the unreached to the mercy of God rather than to attempt to explain them away in terms of arbitrary decrees which deny the genuineness both of the freedom of God and man in the kind of world God wishes to create,

¹Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans," p. 681

²Denney, Gospel Questions And Answers, p. 142. cf. p. 120-123; and, Leonard Hodgson, For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 202-203.

³Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 101-102. cf. Missions In State And Church, p. 204; This Life And The Next, p. 98-99.

The certainty of revelation and faith is that in the universal Christ the world is chosen for salvation, and is saved in principle, and shall be saved in fact. The lost are lost by refusing that gospel in their mysterious and incalculable freedom. And then the question is removed to be one of eschatology rather than predestination. For freedom is well within the scope of a divine election. The self-determining power of the individual is part of the ordered predestination of God, and of the necessity felt by His love to endow man with a freedom like His own if He expected man to respond to His own. Only a fatalist predestination, not a personal, excludes such freedom. When the question as a question of freedom becomes eschatological we may then discuss ... whether a race can be complete with any of its members missing ... may be misleading, and can form no analogy.¹

Several important points emerge from this discussion which may serve to summarize the theological position of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth on these questions. Their emphasis upon the experiential aspects of human response to the work of Christ serves to add weight to their insistence that the freedom both of God and man in creation and redemption must be retained, that the divine aim is to create genuine human freedom which finds its end in personal relations with God, and that this relation flourishes in an atmosphere of growth, development, or progress as our minds are enriched by deeper and fuller insights into what God is doing through the Atonement. But, on the other hand, while this is posited as the Christian ideal, it does not constitute a mechanism for reprobating those who through varied circumstances do not hear or who appear at first sight to reject the Christian Gospel. Here is where the strength of the objective element of the Atonement breaks through. It is possible both to insist that the proper outworking of the Christian religion -- i.e., the "bringing home" of the divine revelation in Christ by the Holy Spirit -- will yield a certain character, insight, assurance, and outlook, and to retain a fundamental optimism that God in Christ has achieved a work of such intrinsic value and cosmic relevance that in an infinite variety of ways and means He is bringing its effects to bear on the world. God aims to conserve the good of the world, and to enrich it while yet creating, preserving and developing freedom as the supreme human good in fellowship with Himself. The Christian, therefore, is content to leave the final destiny of the race and the world in the hands of God while yet striving for a better insight into the divine purpose. We are called not to personal certainty of

¹Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 357. cf. The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 189.

salvation for its own sake, but to certainty of salvation for the world's sake. To know Christ is not only to be brought into personal relations with Him but to share His work of redeeming the world from all forms of evil. The Christian faith is a task as well as a relation.

2. A further question, which has already been answered, but which needs to be isolated briefly here is this, Is this conception of personal faith in Christ consistent with the character of revelation? Revelation, we have seen, is God disclosing a fuller understanding of His purposes in creation and redemption by inspiring men to see the significance of His activity in history. It is consistent with what revelation is to say, therefore, that God wishes that His children should know more of Himself and His will and that He has come to us in Jesus Christ to bring us to Himself. The apostles and early followers of our Lord came to a certain insight or understanding following the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension in which they believed that in Christ God was manifest in the flesh; that His act of Atonement made an end once for all of the power of evil and the condemnation of sin; that in Him they had life, peace, and hope; and that all things were finally to be headed up in Christ. We are the heirs of this witness which comes to us through the Scriptures and the history and experience of the Church. The point that seems of particular relevance here is that if this is what Christ meant to them with what their background and powers of comprehension were, what ought Christ to mean to us now? Throughout these intervening centuries what has the Spirit of God been striving to teach us? It cannot be less than that in Christ alone we have hope of life, but it can be more as we endeavour to shift the point of emphasis from our own personal salvation to a proper understanding of what God is doing and disclosing for us to be delivered -- and this only by the help of the Holy Spirit -- from our ego-centric predicament on the question of the meaning of redemption to comprehend what God is doing in His work of delivering the world from the power of evil to the ideal of His own perfection.

3. Finally, is this ideal of Christian experience which we have expounded from the writings of these theologians consistent with the true nature of faith? If Christian faith means to walk by faith and not by sight, is any sense of certainty because of the content of faith or what is designated personal confrontation of Christ, really to walk by sight rather than by faith? But an important distinction needs to be drawn between faith, blindness, and sight. If to say that to walk by faith rather than by sight means, as is popularly supposed, to walk blindly, unquestioningly, uncertainly, then this is not Christian faith. When the Christian professes to walk by faith, he means that through the redeeming work of Christ he has been won into the confidence that his sins are forgiven, that God has won the moral victory in the world, and that he is now able to take an optimistic view of the end of all things in the purpose of God while yet confronting the serious moral problems and questions of life. His life is rooted in an unshakeable conviction that God has redeemed the world and his own life in Christ. This leads us to discuss the nature of faith in the theology of Dale, Denney, and Forsyth with reference to the intellect, the emotions, and the will, though it must be borne in mind that this traditional division is artificial. Faith involves the activity of the total personality. The division is employed here solely for purposes of expounding systematically the subject matter and does not denote that such a division is formal in human nature.

(a) While a significant balance is retained by all three on the importance of each of these elements of faith it is important to note that with the exception of Denney small emphasis is placed upon faith as assent to truth. Early in his career Dale could speak of faith as a man's consent¹ to the arrangements God has made in Christ for his salvation, but this line of thought receives little attention in the volume of his published works in

¹Dale, The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 27.

favour of other ideas which will be enlarged upon shortly. Forsyth's emphasis here falls on the idea that faith must have a specific theological content; that religion cannot be stated without theology.¹ But it is Denney who stresses this aspect of faith the most. He urges the acceptance of the apostolic message, and, after outlining what is in effect a brief catechetical statement of the faith, he says,

let these truths fill, inspire, and dominate our minds, and for us, too, faith in Christ will be a passing from death unto life.²

However, the common denominator among them on this aspect of faith is its definition as rational insight or intuition. Dale declares that intellectual belief is inadequate but that the soul must enter into possession of the prerogatives of the redeemed. It would be useless to prove, he said, that men have access to God through Christ unless those who were convinced of the truth actually drew near to God; thus, what is more to the point is the fact that despite the intellect's failure to construct a final theory of the Atonement the conscience bows and is at peace before the Cross.³ This may be illustrated further in the following quotation where Dale discusses faith in God,

Most men believe in God, not because His existence has been demonstrated to them, but because they cannot help believing. Their faith is not the product of a priori arguments, or arguments from design; it is rooted in the very depths of their moral and spiritual life; it is the act, not of the logical understanding, but of the Higher Reason.⁴

There is, wrote Denney, a certain condition, or outlook, of the heart needed to see the Godhead in Christ; thus the content of faith is revealed as an insight in religious experience in which God draws near to us and interprets

¹Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 3.

²Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 404. cf. The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 225, 314 ff; "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", p. 671; The Death Of Christ, p. 240; Jesus And The Gospel, p. 239.

³Dale, The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 230.

⁴Dale, Christ And The Controversies Of Christendom, p. 15.

to us the Son, and the Son the Father. Faith, he says, is to the unseen world what sight is to the visible; there can be no blank authority for the mind but the conviction of truth,

Truth, in short is the only thing which has authority for the mind, and the only way in which truth finally evinces its authority is by taking possession of the mind for itself.¹

Forsyth says that the content and conditions of faith are analyzed by the believing man more or less after experience; that our theological beliefs are not first ideas we arrive at, but experiences we go through; and that the theologian is not a syllogist but an observer. What Christianity is, he declares, is a certain interpretation of the facts connected with the life of Jesus Christ; what we need primarily for faith, therefore, is an insight into the Cross to apprehend who Christ was and what He did, not merely to be impressed by Christ.²

(b) What may be designated as primarily the emotional elements of faith in the views of these men can be epitomized in such terms as trust, dependence, surrender, and, indebtedness, release, and communion. The Christian teacher ought to aim, wrote Dale, to present Christ in such a manner as to evoke absolute trust in Him; we are to offer to Christ our homage of perfect trust; our response ought to have the character of abandonment or surrender to Christ, he said.³ Response means an entering into a fuller life; the man who has seen the glory of God, Dale wrote, has larger and loftier aims. Late in his ministry Dale said that he had found during the course of his career many men who wished, who longed to become better, to achieve nobler ideals, better lives, and who became Christians for this reason rather than through a

¹Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 8. cf. The Death Of Christ, p. 239; Studies In Theology, p. 15, 34.

²Forsyth, The Work Of Christ, p. 46-50; The Principle Of Authority, p. 84 ff.

³Dale, The Life And Letters Of J. A. James, p. 302; The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 28; Christian Doctrine, p. 37, 43; The Jewish Temple And The Christian Church, p. 134.

traumatic experience. He lists a number of such factors that motivate men: the sense of loneliness in a soul seeking God, a sense of incompleteness of life, a desire to achieve perfections impossible apart from divine grace, men turning to God in periods of sorrow or crisis, the authority of Christ the perfect one appealing to conscience, and the example of other Christians. These and many other factors contrive to press in on men their need of God and to evoke their response of faith and surrender to or dependence upon Christ.¹

The way to forgiveness and peace, declared Denney, is by implicit trust in Jesus Christ; not the kind of trust fashioned and expressed in a doctrinal statement, but the trust which is evoked by the presence of Christ in ways too subtle and complicated for any doctrinal statement.² True faith means an absolute unreserved trust in Christ.³ There is an important element of renunciation of self and abandonment to Christ in faith, he says.⁴ Men are called upon to cast themselves on Him,

Faith is not the acceptance of a legal arrangement; it is the abandonment of the soul, which has no hope but in the Saviour, to the Saviour who has taken its responsibilities on Himself, and is able to bear it through. It includes the absolute renunciation of everything else, to lay hold on Christ.⁵

In an interesting passage which illustrates the complex character of human response in faith Denney shows that the intellectual, emotional and volitional elements are all present and that it is precisely to this total response that the work of Christ is directed and which it evokes,

It is that for which Christ, as the author of the work of reconciliation, by the nature of the case appeals, and when his appeal is met by the response of faith, the faith itself is natural,

¹Dale, Christian Doctrine, p. 36-37, 196-197; The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 37.

²Denney, Questions Of Faith, p. 173.

³Denney, Jesus And The Gospel, p. 228; The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 163.

⁴Denney, Gospel Questions And Answers, p. 11; Jesus And The Gospel, p. 233.

⁵Denney, Studies In Theology, p. 155. cf. "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", p. 621; "Righteousness (In St. Paul's Teaching)", Op. Cit., p. 789; The Way Everlasting, p. 266.

spontaneous, and in a sense inevitable. It is the right reaction to a new reality brought into a sinner's environment -- a new reality so profound and final that the right reaction to it completely transforms him, making him in Scripture language a new creature.¹

This response involves also a feeling of gratitude for deliverance from sin and judgment to life, and Denney urges that an important connecting link between the objective Atonement and our appropriation of it is just this.² "I do not hesitate to say", he said, "that the sense of debt to Christ is the most profound and pervasive of all emotions in the New Testament";³ "it is by coming under obligation to Him that we know the pardoning love of the Father, as well as everything else that enters into Christian experience and constitutes the blessedness of life in the Kingdom of God".⁴

Forsyth says faith has about it both the qualities of adventure and trust,

To trust Him is not a leap in the dark, but it is a venture none the less. It is a venture of courage and not of despair, of insight not of bewilderment.⁵

But fundamentally, Forsyth stressed throughout his career that faith is trust -- absolute trust in Christ. "Our faith is trust in Christ who died, rather than in the death of a Christ",⁶ he said, "a due faith in Him is immoderate, absolute trust, and it has a creed to correspond. Only an immoderate belief is true enough for the extraordinary tragedy of the world".⁷

¹Denney, The Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation, p. 288. cf. p. 312.

²Denney, The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 195; Gospel Questions And Answers, p. 11.

³Denney, The Death Of Christ, p. 287. cf. p. 317-318.

⁴Denney, The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 12. cf. "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", Op. Cit., p. 669; Jesus And The Gospel, p. 399; "The Primary Marks Of Christianity", Op. Cit., p. 73; Letters Of Principal James Denney To His Family And Friends, p. XVI-XVII.

⁵Forsyth, The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 79. cf. The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 254, 337.

⁶Forsyth, The Holy Father And The Living Christ, p. 69.

⁷Forsyth, The Justification Of God, p. 126. cf. Rome, Reform, And Reaction, p. 137; The Christian Ethic Of War, p. 178, 190; The Church And The Sacraments, p. 5.

To believe in Christ means to be under passionate obligation to Him; it means to owe ourselves to Him.¹ And, our trust brings us into personal communion with Him; salvation and communion -- both with Himself and in the Church -- are not separate but one.²

3. Finally, great stress is laid by all three upon faith being obedience to God in Christ. Here Dale employs an attractive figure when he emphasizes that men are called upon to acknowledge Christ as Prince and Saviour; they ought to acknowledge His Lordship.³ It is our duty, he says, to yield to Christ's authority, and hence, to the authority of God and when we do, then we discover the true source of power to work good, the true end of our lives in the freedom of right action in union with Him,

We have to obey God in Christ. But when the real secret of the Christian revelation is mastered, the obedience assumes a unique character. The will by which we are ruled is the will of another who is yet not another. The foundations of our life are in Him. We are one with Him as the branch is one with the vine. He is our higher life, our true self. The Will we obey is a force which acts, not from without, but from within. It inspires as well as governs, impels as well as commands. This wonderful relation to Christ, and this alone, renders it possible to obey Him. Not until we abide in Christ and Christ abides in us are we able to keep His commandments.⁴

Denney makes frequent reference to the obedience of faith which ought to characterize human response to the work of Christ. For example,

¹Forsyth, The Charter Of The Church, p. 16; Missions In State And Church, p. 258-259.

²Forsyth, The Church And The Sacraments, p. 43. cf. The Work Of Christ, p. 69; The Principle Of Authority, p. 328.

³Dale, The Ordination Services Of The Rev. R. W. Dale, p. 34; The Living God The Saviour Of All Men, p. 27; Christ And The Controversies Of Christendom, p. 10; The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 129; Nine Lectures On Preaching, p. 193; The Epistle Of James And Other Discourses, p. 185, 274-275.

⁴Dale, Laws Of Life For The Common Life; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1892, p. 287. cf. Atheism And The House Of Commons, p. 5; The Evangelical Revival And Other Sermons, p. 62; Christian Doctrine, p. 208.

We speak of receiving the Gospel, believing it, welcoming it, and so forth; it is equally needful to remember that it claims our obedience. God not only beseeches us to be reconciled, He commands us to repent. He makes a display of His redeeming love in the Gospel -- a love which contains pardon, renewal, and immortality; and He calls on all men for a life in correspondence with that love.¹

Faith, says Forsyth, is a moral act and relation; it is an attitude of will to God. Perfection is obedience to God in Christ which puts a man in right relation to God and allows the germ of first faith to sprout and blossom into the divine ideal.² The response of faith is obedience,

the obedience that is faith -- faith being the greatest act a will can do, as its absolute self-assignment to the grace of the Holiest and His holy love.³

In fact, in a poignant phrase, he insists that human freedom may be realized only in obedience to God, "absolute obedience is the condition of entire freedom".⁴ This is one important lesson we learn from the work of Christ, he says; our wills are our dearest possessions, and just as Christ gave His up in His obedience unto death, so we learn in Him to give up our wills to God.⁵

It is clear that this discussion of the intellectual, emotional, and volitional elements of faith in Dale, Denney, and Forsyth exhibits their view of faith as the total commitment of the person to God in Christ. When we are confronted by the Holy Spirit with the truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself in an eternal act of redemption, we must rightly respond in fullest measure with our love, faith, and obedience, gratefully receiving the forgiveness that has been won, and loyally striving to serve the One who deigns to take us up into His redeeming activity. But,

¹Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 297. cf. Studies In Theology, p. 28, 155; "St. Paul's Epistle To The Romans", Op. Cit., p. 587; The Way Everlasting, p. 133.

²Forsyth, Christian Perfection, p. 6-7, 84-85; Rome, Reform, And Reaction, p. 131; The Work Of Christ, p. 21.

³Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 67.

⁴Ibid., p. 272. cf. The Church And The Sacraments, p. 18.

⁵Forsyth, Missions In State And Church, p. 203; The Cruciality Of The Cross, p. 92.

is there a key idea here which may serve to summarize and epitomize what they mean by response? How may we draw together these ideas into a leading idea which takes them up as constituent elements of itself, and which is consistent with the development of the doctrine of the Atonement that we have presented in this study? This may be done in the idea to which reference has already been made, namely, that both as given by the Holy Spirit and achieved as an insight, we have the conviction -- the rational, moral conviction or insight -- that God was in Christ redeeming the world and that by this act He evokes our faith, wins our love, and commands our obedience. Faith is an unshakeable, God-given conviction¹ that these things are so. But we

¹Dr. Hodgson has pointed out that an implicit paradox lies at the basis of all human thinking, "the paradox that there is always a quest for objectivity which can only be satisfied by the object fulfilling the demands of the thinker's canons of thought", For Faith And Freedom, I, p. 95. Thus, he adds, thinking involves a fundamental act of faith -- the faith that existence is meaningful. "What then is objectivity? Fundamentally it is an object of faith, the faith that by the use of our reason, if we honestly seek to discount our personal prejudices and discuss with one another what we think we see, we shall be able to pass beyond an existentialist limitation to our private worlds and to share in the knowledge of a common reality", Ibid., p. 99. In revelation God both gives to us, and men who have a flair for seeing what others do not see, the significance of the divine activity in history.

This is that combination of illumination and insight that constitutes the true character of revelation which is the anchor of faith, and it yields objective reality -- the reality that God the Creator has entered to redeem, and that He has redeemed and is redeeming the world to serve His own purpose of freedom and love.

It will be recalled that Aristotle, when discussing our logical understanding of the nature of reality in the Posterior Analytics, locates the epistemological ideal in an intuitive grasp of first principles apart from the interposition of a middle term. In fact, the basic character of first principles is that (1) they are structurally immediate, i.e., there is no middle term; (2) they are epistemologically certain, i.e., they are better known by an unshakeable conviction; and, (3) they are ontologically true, i.e., the intellect must have grasped the essence of the thing. The point to be borne in mind here is the intuitive grasp of first principles of which the mind is unshakeably persuaded as to their truth. True knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is based on insight (νοῦς) which grasps first principles (ἀρχαί) with an unshakeable conviction (πίστις). This is parallel to the Christian understanding of faith advanced here. The specifically Christian content of faith is that in Christ God has achieved an enduring work of redemption and that God is now leading mankind by His Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of what He has done and is doing.

do not arrive at faith by a series of inductions; no, fundamentally, we stand in our faith and witness to certain facts of history and experience declaring, "I see things now as I didn't before; come stand where I stand, and see if you can see what I see".

It is this fundamental conviction that God has acted in Christ for the redemption of the world that constitutes the essence of living Christian faith. Dr. Hodgson has expressed it in the following,

To the eye of faith the agent of revelation is God: God making Himself known to man through His creative and redemptive activity in nature and history. To the eye of Christian faith the revelation in Jesus Christ is the clue to the understanding of everything else.¹

Dale, when speaking of the ways in which the revelation of God comes to us said,

There are instincts, impulses, slumbering in our nature to which all this appeals ... Without asking for any proof that what we are told is true, accepting it all just as it is given to us, we fear and worship Him.²

What needs to be stressed here, is that both God and man are active in the giving and receiving of revelation; and that this latter is not a passive receiving, but the active exercise of the rational faculty, aided by the Holy Spirit, inquiring into the evidence, revising its premises, and otherwise constantly striving to achieve deeper insights into the significance of the divine activity. This is set forward, as already noted, in the following passage, and it need only be added that the quotation occurs in a context where Dale is enquiring about what is necessary to the true knowledge of God. Here he said that the 'spirit of wisdom' may also be called the 'spirit of revelation' for unless the spirit of wisdom is given the revelation is unintelligible. Both the objective and subjective elements are real

¹For Faith And Freedom, I, p. 116.

²Dale, Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions, p. 5. The Atonement, p. 164-165.

and vital,

When the Spirit of God illuminates the mind we see the meaning of what Christ said and of what Christ did. We simply find what was in the Christian revelation from the beginning ... There is nothing violent, nothing abnormal, in the experience of those who are thus illuminated by the Holy Spirit; they simply obtain more efficient use of a faculty which is necessary to the integrity of human nature.¹

This same emphasis on conviction as essential in faith in the theology of Denney may be seen in the following, where the two ideas of confidence in Christ and activity for Him stand out also,

the Christian graces are essentially powers; they are new virtues and forces which God has implanted in the soul that it may be able to do His work in the world ... Faith is a conviction with regard to things unseen, that makes them present and real. Faith in God as revealed in Christ, and in his death for sin, makes reconciliation real; it gives the believer peace with God. But it is not shut up in the realm of things inward and unseen ... Wherever it exists it works.²

We have already set forward the idea of moral action as the key to reality for Forsyth, and we may note here specifically that faith is primarily ethical conviction. For example, he says,

There is, and can be, nothing so certain to me as that which is involved in the most crucial and classic experience of my moral self, my conscience, my real, surest me ... The test of all philosophy is ethical conviction. That is where we touch reality -- in moral action (God as Spirit is God in actu), and especially in that action of the moral nature which renews it in Christ.³

This is where Christian faith is both defined and experienced, where the heart finds both its rest and its work; it is in the conviction that God in Christ has entered into this world to redeem it, that He has done

¹Dale, The Epistle To The Ephesians, p. 142.

²Denney, The Epistles To The Thessalonians, p. 26-27. cf. The Second Epistle To The Corinthians, p. 21; The Atonement And The Modern Mind, p. 72; The Way Everlasting, p. 2-3.

³Forsyth, The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, p. 197. cf. "Christ And The Christian Principle", Op. Cit., p. 164-165. In The Principle Of Authority he wrote, "Logic is rooted in Ethic, for the truth we see depends on the men we are. Ethic is rooted in theology, for we are made men by the gift and grace of God. And theology is rooted in living faith -- which is the Supreme Gift of God in man, because it is the response evoked by His supreme revelation and gift of Himself to man as Father, Saviour, and King", p. 9. cf. p. 299-304, 386.

this by taking to Himself its sin and evil, that these are broken once for all in a finished work, that we enter freely into the forgiveness which sin-bearing love has won for us, and, that we are called to discover the wider ranges of meaning of the Atonement for the world's redemption and our place in this activity as co-labourers with God. The Christian community, said Dale, is not designed by God merely for the salvation of an esoteric group,

Churches exist not merely for the consolation and ultimate salvation of their individual members, but that the Divine life which dwells in Christian men -- developed, invigorated and disciplined by common worship, by ethical as well as by spiritual instruction, by the atmosphere and the traditions and the public opinion of a society which is the home of Christ and of the Spirit of Christ -- may change and transfigure the whole order of the world.¹

And Forsyth declared that "the final meaning of conversion is not deliverance merely, but surrender and service to the uttermost".²

In the conviction of faith that God has acted once for all to redeem the world and that we are called to this fellowship of redeeming love and service, the complex character of the exercise of faith in human experience and the variations of human personality are taken into account. Full scope is allowed in this fundamental conception for the exercise of faith in the various matrixes of human experience while retaining the true perspective of the personal, rational, moral, and teleological elements stressed in this study. Through the Atonement we who are sinners are redeemed by God in Christ to an eternal salvation and we must not only accept gratefully the forgiveness which we so much desire and so little deserve, but along with it we must enter humbly into that cooperative activity with God in helping to make applicable the objective Atonement to the world and men. Dr. Hodgson expresses it poignantly in the following,

¹Dale, Fellowship With Christ, p. 364.

²Forsyth, The Principle Of Authority, p. 388. cf. p. 416; Missions In State And Church, p. 260.

The making of that sacrifice, the opening of the way was something which only He could do, which He has done: a once-for-all achievement in virtue of which we live in a redeemed world. What He has entrusted to the Church is the work of harvesting the fruits of the victory He has won. For this He needs a body of men and women enlisted to fight under His banner against sin, the world and the devil, cleansed from their own sins in order that they may be able to forget themselves in sharing in the rescue and perfecting of His creation.¹

We stand assured that God has won the moral victory in the world, and our confidence yields the joy, peace, and hope that only He can give; but it is an assurance having the quality not of a static "saved-ness", but of a divine act which has taken us up into it and which, despite our limitations and failures, enables us to function in its service freely and gladly. We move with God toward the final goal. Through our willing bondage and loving obedience, with expanding horizons and deepening insights, God in Christ shall win His victory again and again in us and through us for His own glory.

At the risk of tiring the reader, in conclusion it need only be said briefly, that this study is put forward to provide new light on the doctrine of the Atonement advanced by Dale, Denney, and Forsyth. It is clear that for the most part their critics have not grasped the nature or importance of the fundamental revision of the existing forms of thought at which they aimed.

¹For Faith And Freedom, II, p. 131. cf. p. 214 where he says, "I hope I have made clear my conviction that the heart of the Christian gospel is the message of God's free grace in Christ, of cleansing and forgiveness ready and waiting for all who repent. Let there be no mistake about that. If to a man burdened with the consciousness of his sins there could not be found anywhere in this world someone to say with authority in the name of Christ: 'Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee', that would be the final and ultimate failure of the Church, failure in its own specific task. From this root must all its thought and action spring. But we need to reopen the question: What are we forgiven for? If we are tempted to stop short at forgiveness and the man's own reconciliation to God and salvation, to treat these as the end and go no further, our gospel is inadequate to God's revelation of Himself in both the Bible of the theologians and the universe of philosophers".

Far from restating the older abstract, juridical forms both in respect of the judgment Christ bore and the way the Atonement is relevant to the race, these men strove to show that the Atonement is an act of God calculated to deal with the facts of evil and sin on a cosmic scale, and that it can be relevant to the world and men only along moral, personal, and teleological lines. What is of particular significance on this last point, is that they had far more to say, as the body of this thesis shows, on the actual relation of the Atonement to the world and men than is generally thought to be the case. Further, the comparison which has been drawn between the views they put forward and the theology Dr. Hodgson has more recently developed into a coherent whole is striking, and, it is believed, an important contribution to an understanding of the continuing problem the Church confronts on the meaning of God's redeeming work in Christ for the world at large. Finally, it has been shown that those who have either criticized or followed these men, and the latter in recent years is true particularly of Denney, on the supposition that they founded their theology on a particular doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures have not grasped sufficiently well either the doctrine of the Scriptures put forward by these men, or their method of constructing a doctrine of the Atonement, or the true meaning of that doctrine for them in relation to God, the world, and the race.

Appendix

(re Chapter III, Section XI)

Certain insights gleaned from the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead, whose system is not incompatible with what has been advanced by these three theologians, will be of assistance to us in developing this theme. As the argument unfolds it will be clear that there are quite striking similarities between certain fundamental metaphysical principles of Whitehead's philosophy and certain ideas that Forsyth put forward, in advance of Dr. Whitehead by a number of years.¹ We must begin, therefore, with a brief sketch of those ideas from Professor Whitehead's books that bear upon the point to be developed.

Reality, for Whitehead, consists of an organized system of what he designates "actual entities" or "actual occasions", which, he says, are subjects or selves; they are "the final real things of which the world is made up".² There are also what he calls "eternal objects" which are the ideals, values, or abstract ideas of objects which are realized by the actual entities. He defines an eternal object as "any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world".³ As subjects or selves, actual entities experience data or materials drawn from other actual entities at their demise by means of a process of prehension or feeling.⁴ The prehension of an eternal object he calls a conceptual prehension and constitutes the mental pole of an actual entity; whereas, the prehension of the concrete data of another actual entity is known as a physical prehension and constitutes the physical pole of the actual entity. The eternal objects as guiding ideals govern the selection and absorption of a datum. Thus guided by certain ideals the actual entity may prehend a datum positively or negatively (reject it) in

¹These ideas emerge chiefly from Forsyth's The Person And Place Of Jesus Christ, first published in 1909. cf. also Christian Aspects Of Evolution; London: The Epworth Press, 1950.

²A. N. Whitehead, Process And Reality; New York: The Social Science Book Store, 1941, p. 27.

³Ibid., p. 70.

⁴Ibid., p. 35.

accordance with a subjective aim that it has fashioned for itself from its prehension of particular eternal objects. This subjective aim is the ideal which the actual entity has selected for itself from the world of eternal objects, for it is a causa sui in this process, and its choice will determine its own nature, development, and character at the point of satisfaction. All actual entities endure for a finite period and at their death they "give out" concrete data for ingression into other actual entities.

However, there is an important difference between the being of God as an actual entity and other actual entities, Whitehead says. While it is in their passing away that actual entities provide concrete data for prehension by other actual entities, God abides, He does not pass away; He provides from Himself as the store of values data for prehension by other actual entities. This aspect of God's nature in virtue of which He provides data for others is called by Whitehead God's Superject Nature. But, God also has a conceptual and a physical pole like other actual entities, which Whitehead calls the primordial and consequent natures of God.¹ Viewed as primordial, God is "the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality;" "He is the lure for feeling, the eternal urge of desire".² That is, in His primordial nature God provides in Himself the order or arrangement of eternal objects as ideal possibilities for the prehension of actual entities. God arranges the eternal objects in ideal patterns and He desires that they be received by actual entities to perfect their possibilities; but He does not coerce, He persuades.

What is important for our use here is: (1) the concept of teleological, valuing, free, actual entities; (2) the eternal objects as objects of value

¹Ibid., p. 521, 523.

²Ibid., p. 521, 522. God's consequent nature is His prehension physically of the concrete data of the evolving universe; which implies that God may be developing continually, for, because of creative advance in the universe the consequent nature of God is not complete, p. 523-524.

to actual entities; (3) the fact that God conserves the eternal objects in the arrangement of ideal possibilities for actual entities in Himself; and (4) that God acts not coercively but persuasively. About Christ Whitehead says,

The life of Christ is not an exhibition of over-ruling power. Its glory is for those who can discern it, and not for the world. Its power lies in its absence of force. It has the decisiveness of a supreme ideal, and that is why the history of the world divides at this point of time.¹

¹A. N. Whitehead, Religion In The Making; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930, p. 56-57.

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