

FOREWORD

This book has its place within the high debate upon the interpretation of the work of Christ, or the doctrine of the Atonement, as it was set in motion by the Reformation divines, and continued by their successors for three centuries and more. It is with the classical exponents of evangelical theology that Dr. Clark reckons, explicitly or by implication. The renewed interest in that theology in recent years will secure him a wider and readier reading, probably, than he would have found, say, thirty years ago. No reader, I think, with any lively awareness of the problems, can fail to be carried along by the argument, rigorous and closely knit as it is, or to recognize the gravity, subtlety, and religious insight with which it is developed. The conclusions have philosophical as well as theological import; for Dr. Clark, unlike some others of those who are leading us back to the springs of evangelical theology, refuses to separate religious belief from *Weltanschauung*. The thesis which he presents demands and deserves deliberate and critical consideration. Without presuming to anticipate the results of such consideration on the reader's part, I venture to commend the book as one in which I have found both stimulus to thought and fresh illumination upon its great theme, and, what is more, the touch of a wise and deeply devout spirit.

C. H. DODD

PREFACE

It was with utmost hesitancy that I began to write this book, hovering in a "strait betwixt two". Cause sufficient for hesitancy there was; for there must always be fear lest the most sacred themes should be touched with too coarse or rough a hand; and the theme of these pages is assuredly one of the most sacred in all the world. There was also the greater fear induced by the haunting warning that they must be clean who handle the vessels of the Lord. For that matter, the book was commenced many years ago and then, under the stress of the indicated hesitancies, laid aside. If it be a mark of presumption that the hesitancies were at last overcome, presumption brings its penalty, now that the final words are set down, in a feeling of profound disappointment and self-reproach. Disappointment, because so much of even the writer's own poor thought has refused to be run into the moulds of clear and adequate expression; self-reproach—intensified into shame—because the high experiences which the study compels the writer to set before his readers remain little more than a name to the writer himself. So soiled and tattered one's own garments, compared with the white robes one bids others wear! Yet perhaps pages so begun and so ended may have some little truth to teach, if sincerity and reverence have gone to the making of them; and this much at least I would humbly claim.

The book is not controversial or critical except incidentally here and there; and when it has become so, it is with real reluctance that I have permitted it to drift upon the controversial or critical line. It has not been altogether avoidable. For when the development of ideas which I have tried to sketch has come within sight of or into touch with ideas at variance with my own, the fact could not be ignored. If at any point it became clear that opposing views would suggest themselves to a reader's mind, I was under compulsion to render a reason for the faith that is in me and to meet the implied challenge. And I confess that such occasions became more numerous than I could have wished. But I repeat that the book is not *primarily* controversial or critical. At any rate, it is not as starting from, or as built round, other theories that it has been planned. And hence there is comparatively little reference to other books on the topic, even to those best known. I should not however like it to be supposed that these, as well as not a few less well known, have not been read with care. Yet, having read them, I have wished that anything I might say should be based—I dare not say upon realized experience—but at any rate upon glimpses of and aspirations after an

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experience which is far, far off indeed, but yet so illuminated that its outlines, though not the full richness of its content, can be discerned plainly enough to quicken desire; and an experience whereof in the soul's rare exalted moments the fringes may be touched. For so based, the book's pages should possess a stronger appeal than a merely critical or speculative discussion can ever possess for those who want their religious thinking to point a direct pathway to something beyond itself, and who say

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.

I am aware that the treatment is upon occasion somewhat of the "sermonic" type, with something of the pulpit appeal. I do not know that this is a thing of which I need be ashamed. Indeed, it was inevitable. Upon this theme, if upon any, the theologian necessarily becomes the evangelist, and preaches most of all to himself. I have said something of the kind in the body of the book. For all the while, that Figure stands in view, with its appeal "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" How can anything written about that appealing Figure be itself other than an echoed appeal, implicit always, explicit when the frequent moment permits or calls?

That portion of the book written after its resumption (the larger portion) has been prepared under circumstances which made the writing hard. I do not say this by way of deprecating criticism in advance. But it may serve as some sort of apology for certain blemishes which are probably to be found, and may at least excuse me from the accusation of carelessness. In the twilights which descend upon one as one treads certain valleys of human experience, one's sight is apt to become blurred; and there may be many a raggedness about the garments in which I have dressed the thoughts I peered at, and fancied I caught, in the half-dark—this quite apart from their essential truth or error. I do not know. I must take the verdict upon it, whatever the verdict be, offering only such excuse as the above facts may provide.

My cordial thanks are due, and are hereby offered, to Professor C. H. Dodd, M.A., D.D., for his kindness in writing the foreword to this volume.

NOTE.—It may be well to mention, though I do so with reluctance, that the first chapter of this book appeared in the

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London Quarterly Review under the title "The Standpoint for a Doctrine of the Atonement", so far back as 1910. I state the fact because in a book published a number of years later one or two points of that article were made in phrases not very remotely resembling mine.

The book has had to be reduced somewhat from its intended length to meet publication requirements. Consequently some matters which, though not of primary importance, are nevertheless very relevant, have had to be left undealt with, and others have received briefer treatment than I should have liked. Readers to whom such points may occur are asked to believe that they have not been overlooked. Nothing essential to the main argument has been omitted.

H. W. C.

BROXBOURNE, HERTS

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