

Doctored Christadelphianism

“Dying for Himself” now updated into “Betterment of His Body”

I well remember the feeling of revulsion to the point of nausea which came over me when over twenty years ago I read the words of A.D.Norris in “Understanding the Bible” that when Jesus died upon the cross the Devil hung there dead. I knew that the writer did not believe in a literal devil any more than we do, or that he was literally dead when Jesus died, but the thought was so nearly parallel with that of the Scribes when they said He hath an unclean spirit and which Jesus characterized as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, that I felt a fierce anger that an educated Christian could ever have conceived, much less published, such an offensive statement about the Holy One of God.

That now seems an age ago; my bitter feeling against the man who wrote it has abated. We never hear of the book now and it seems likely that many of his own brethren were appalled by what he said and in consequence in spite of his gifts he has been under something of a cloud in recent years. It appears however from the text of an address given in Australia and printed in the April 1974 issue of “The Believer” that he is still busily promulgating his view that Jesus was obliged to die the death He suffered in order that the source of temptation in His flesh should be eliminated. For good or ill he is now much more circumspect in the choice of words but it is abundantly evident that his basic view has not changed. He has clearly learned from experience that his theory must be skilfully wrapped up in the invert phraseology of which he is a master, if it is not to outrage all but a minority of present-day Christadelphians.

Nothing therefore so far as A.D.Norris is concerned has actually changed. What has happened is that he has invented a new approach which he undoubtedly hopes will heal or conceal the deep controversy which is shaking their ecclesias into ruin and enable all Christadelphians to fall in behind him in a united recognition that human nature can only be cleansed from sin by putting it to death. The new departure is that there is now little overt emphasis on the badness of human nature; the term sin-in-the-flesh is avoided and there are no references to a condemned Christ or an inherited curse and certainly no more talk of the devil in His body. Instead, the argument has been turned right round and all the emphasis is laid upon the improvement which will result in the natural corruptible human body when after death it is changed to an incorruptible. This will clearly make the theory less obviously objectionable but it does not bring it the least bit nearer to the Scriptural truth which Jesus expressed when He said that every tree is known by his own fruit;

“A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

The first part of the address is unexceptionable. He refers to the Crucifixion and asks whether we will ignore it and join the mockers, or participate with the man who said, “We indeed justly, for we receive the reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.” He affirms the true humanity of Jesus and the reality of His temptation, although he does not here attempt any reconciliation between this and the Christadelphian teaching that His birth gave Him the strength to overcome sin which no other man ever has. Leave this for the moment - he says we know that He was temptable because He was made in all points like His brethren but He did not sin. He recognises, as we all do, that from the beginning of His responsible life to the hour of His death He did not once or in any particular transgress the law of God.

Now, we of the Nazarene Fellowship, with we believe the concurrence of every Scripture from Moses and the Prophets to the Apostles take the view that this proves that in His life Jesus was a perfect upright man. He said Himself, “I do always those things which please my Father.” God Himself declared, “Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” No one was ever able to show Him in any way guilty of sin, and indeed, the only charges which His bitterest enemies were able to make against Him were (a) He claimed to be the Son of God; which we know was a true claim, and (b) that He was in the possession of an unclean spirit; and this of course is the same charge which Christadelphians use to explain why it was right for Him to be put to death.

We therefore draw the conclusion that Pontius Pilate, however weak and unjust in what he allowed to happen, was absolutely right when he declared, "I find no cause of death in him." We believe there was no reason, in Himself or on His own account, for Him to die and therefore we are able to accept and understand that His death was a sacrifice for us. But A.D.Norris cannot accept this. He believes that because Jesus was temptable and His temptations arose from the physical nature which He had in common with all other men, He could only be said to have overcome when His physical nature had been destroyed by dying.

This is how he puts it now:

"...the Lord during the days of his weakness was the Lord who lacked something that would come to him, after his weakness had been brought to an end in death."

He does not venture so far as to say what that "something" was that the Lord lacked; and whatever it was, it never prevented Him from being obedient. If Pilate had thought of this lack he might have felt less unease in handing Him over to the Jews to crucify Him. To us, it appears that when His weakness - which we recognize - was brought to an end in death, He did not gain something but in fact lost everything! Why did He cry in despair, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Questioned, no doubt A.D.Norris would say that He has in mind that after the 3rd day He rose again incorruptible, but why does he not say so? Why does he call it something? The reason is obvious, if he said this he would be saying in effect that only an incorruptible can overcome temptation, which manifestly is not true because Jesus overcame all temptations while He was in the flesh with all its weaknesses.

One of the key texts, which he quotes, is Hebrews 5:8,9:-

"Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

It appears to us from the Gospels that the life Jesus lived was both a probation for Himself and an example for us and our conclusion from this text is that He had been proved to be perfect in obedience by the things which He suffered in His life, and that it was only after this demonstration of perfect humanity that He was qualified to become the author of eternal salvation by dying for the sin of the world. His comment upon it is as follows:

"Like His brethren, with strong crying and tears He cried for help; learned obedience through His suffering; was made perfect through dying."

This is not in fact what the passage says, it says He was made perfect through suffering, and suffering can only come to people who are alive. This is not splitting a hair - it is the crux of the matter.

It is a self-evident truth that His death did not make Him perfect in any sense whatsoever. It destroyed Him and until He was raised three days later in the spirit He was a dead corpse. It is the very negation of truth to say He was made perfect through dying!

The essential requirements of the Jewish law on sacrifice, prescribed that an offering for sin had to be the property of the offerer; a selected individual of a legally clean species, and most particularly, without blemish or defect. It was only when these conditions had been observed that a sacrifice could be acceptable, if Jesus had been what most Christadelphians have hitherto believed and what the writer under discussion is still affirming, to wit, a man inheriting a defiled nature from Adam, each of those vital conditions would have been breached.

Many are now willing to recognize the validity of this reasoning and can see that if Jesus' death was in any sense a true sacrifice, the conditions which apply to Him ought to correspond with those applying to the sin-offerings made under the law. The tragedy is that their responsible leaders are preventing those who might from opening their minds to the light by constant reiteration of the old errors in new ways and the threat of what will happen to anyone who does not uphold the B.A.S.F. I know from recent correspondence that in the backwoods of ecclesial life they can still talk of an unclean condemned Christ, but the Editors and men like A.D.Norris and W.F.Barling no longer dare to do so in print. Even H.P.Mansfield has been obliged of late to moderate his language. But they still all believe of Jesus that His

death was required for Himself because of the sinful tendencies of His flesh. The consequence of this is that it is now true to say that as a community, Christadelphians no longer believe in the Sacrifice of Christ; they believe in His death, but their use of the word sacrifice in connection with it is either meaningless or fraudulent. They break the bread and drink the wine and some perhaps think that they believe in it as a sacrifice, but they deny it effectively by their doctrine.

In the present climate of opinion therefore they have found that the safest course is to ignore The Atonement if possible, but if obliged to deal with it they are developing this new approach whereby the old doctrines in the writings of Dr Thomas and R.Roberts which will no longer stand up to critical examination and honest exposition are as far as possible defended and put forward in such a manner as to make them acceptable to those who are questioning the theory of implanted sin. This we think was the object of the address we are dealing with and the reason why "The Believer" Committee decided to print it at this precise time.

The big conclusion, which has been dignified by printing in heavy type on page 6, is as follows:-

"So, when the Lord said, and the letter to the Hebrews said, three times about Him, that perfection came by His death, then we must realize what betterment of His body was brought about by His dying."

A politician once said there are lies, damned lies, and statistics and this statement is all three. Not three times, not once and nowhere did the Lord say, or does Hebrews say, that perfection came by death, and as for the last phrase "what betterment of His body was brought about by His dying," this is without question one of the most lunatic perversions of all time and must inevitably join those other monstrosities of doctrine like Barling's unspeakable

"There was no injustice in His death - it was not wrong for Him to die ... otherwise God would have connived in the murder of an innocent man;"

and John Carter's astonishing adverb in

"Jesus did not bear the penalty of sin; He merely suffered death,"

together with his own former blasphemous

". . . there Devil hung there dead."

"Betterment" is an astounding word for anyone to use about dying. It might come less strangely from an orthodox minister in the belief that the soul of the person he is committing to the grave has gone to heaven - but this is a Christadelphian and he says we must realize what betterment of His body was brought about by His dying! His hands and His feet were lacerated by the nails; His side was pierced and His life blood dripped to the ground under the Cross; only His bones were not broken! This was the betterment of His body! Was there no-one to comfort Jesus with such a thought in His agony in the garden of Gethsemane? When He cried "It is finished" and felt Himself forsaken even by God - surely this doctor of philosophy should have been there with his precious "betterment."!

We are agreed that Jesus was sinless, so that within the limits of His situation as a corruptible man He could have been no better - He was a perfect man. If He had been less than this would God have made the declaration, He is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased? As a man of flesh and blood He was not perfect in the same sense that He was perfect after His resurrection, but these are two different lives, natural life and spirit life. It was not Jesus' death which changed His state from natural to spiritual but the fact that God raised Him up again in the spirit. The point is that Jesus did not need to die to attain an incorruptible life - he was entitled to this as of right and could have claimed it if He chose. He only needed to die to save us, and to die in this dreadful fashion at the hands of wicked men in order to be seen to be giving His life as a sacrifice for ours. What a fantastic and destructive parody of the truth is this theory of dying to make Himself perfect!

Let me if I may for the sake of clarifying the argument; bring the matter down to a personal level and make a point which I think will show how hopelessly wide of the mark is the idea that perfection can only be achieved by dying. I have to confess myself a sinner and on my own account worthy of nothing. I had

no claim on God even for the natural life I have, far less to eternal life. By my understanding of the Gospel I hope for what A.D.Norris calls a betterment of the body, which with the Scripture writers I prefer to call immortality, and the fact is I might - I say I might - attain to this without ever dying, because I place my faith in the Saviour whom, I believe died for me. But, if I should die, this will be in no sense a betterment but a worsening, but please God I may never experience the betterment which he deems was appropriate for Jesus! Compared with this, to fall asleep is a small thing and if a sinner can receive betterment so mercifully, let us have an explanation why this innocent harmless man died nailed to a Cross suffering the agonies which wicked people inflicted upon Him because His very existence had become an offence to them.

If we ask the question, Why did Jesus die?, the answer we get from Scripture is that He was the antitypical Passover Lamb, "for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7); in the words of Peter, "He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 4:18); Jesus likened Himself to a good shepherd who will die in the saving of his sheep and He said He came to give His life a ransom for many. None of these answers are satisfactory to a Christadelphian, because he will be terrified of the idea of what he calls substitution or of the innocent suffering what was justly due to the guilty, even though this is precisely what the Apostle says and exactly what Jesus' own words convey. So sacrifice is out! What do they put in its place? Here is what A.D.Norris says;

"(He) acknowledged that those weaknesses that exist in a nature inherited on His mother's side from our common parents, could not be overcome save by dying."

Absolutely false! Jesus never acknowledged any such thing. The whole purpose of both His teaching and His example was to show that the weaknesses we have can be overcome, or could be overcome if we willed. We do not sin because we have to but because we choose to, and we do not only have weaknesses we also have strengths and the purpose of our probation is to learn to counter the one with the other. Like the first man placed on probation we shall fail and come to realize that we need the mercy of God and that salvation is of grace, not of works. Some do better than others; it says of some that they were perfect before God - is anyone rash enough to call that a lie? Some do not bother to try and others... that we have the Devil in our flesh and until we are dead he will lead us astray.

If, as he says, the weaknesses Jesus inherited on His mother's side could not be overcome save by dying, it would surely have been helpful to the understanding of "The Believer" readers - and perhaps even to himself - if he had gone on to tell what he thinks Jesus inherited on His Father's side. If he says that Jesus inherited from His Father the strength to overcome the weaknesses inherited from His mother, which is the usual Christadelphian explanation, one replies (1) Where then was there any credit due to Jesus personally in overcoming temptation? and (2) Where would be the purpose, or sense, or justice in God causing Him to be born with a sinful nature, adding to Him the strength to overcome that sinful nature and then requiring His death because His nature might have caused Him to sin? ! If this is not charging God with foolishness, it certainly looks that way. If on the other hand he could bear to contemplate for a moment that the weaknesses of the flesh are not in themselves sinful and that Jesus overcame them by calling upon those powers which are in or available to all other people and lived an obedient life because He determined to please His Father, he would see that there was indeed no cause of death in Him.

Unfortunately for him he cannot accept this reasoning since he would then have no alternative but to accept what in our view Scripture so clearly shows, that Jesus voluntarily went to His unjust and undeserved death because He had learned from the Law and the Prophets that the human race lay under sentence of death because of sin and could only be delivered by the offering of a true substitutionary sacrifice.

Because of their past history of acrimonious controversy around the subject stemming from Robert Roberts' perverse and autocratic attitude it is practically impossible now for a Christadelphian to see, or at least admit to seeing, that Jesus was a free man; He did not have to die except for the purpose of saving us and therefore it follows that if He had lacked the courage, or the faith, or the love, or the endurance to bear the suffering and had called upon legions of angels to deliver Him from the Jews - they would have come and delivered Him. What would have happened then we do not know, but one thing is certain - the human race would have perished sooner or later and probably by now the earth would be uninhabited as it was in the beginning.

He did not waiver; He let Himself be taken and went to His death, because He knew this was what His Father wanted Him to do, to show His mercy towards us - because God so loved the world that He was willing to give His only begotten Son to save it. But this again, Norris cannot accept. He is obliged to admit that Jesus was sinless personally, and he no longer dares to say, as they used to, that His nature was obnoxious to God, but he has to find an explanation of His death somewhere. So he has concluded that He had to be put to death because His nature could have caused Him to sin! See what he says:

“His dying was the culmination of His obedience to His Father and its final sealing; that the dead One had dedicated all to God and now renounced what might have made Him do otherwise.”

What a staggering, fantastic, fatal perversion this is, and where is there the least apprehension or recognition of any sacrificial purpose or significance? He says God willed Him to die because His nature was such that it might have caused Him to sin. He freely admits it did not, but because it could have done so He had to be put to death - not just to drop off in old age or sickness like most people, but crucified! What kind of a monster of injustice does this make God appear? Even the very imperfect justice which we have learned to expect in this world does not pass vicious sentences upon people because they might commit a crime. As long as we do not break the law we are reasonably safe, but this man, as even the felon dying beside Him realised “hath done nothing amiss.” And here we have a scholar, nearly 2000 years on, telling us that it was right that God should have required His death in order to put away “that power that could have sinned, by dying” so that He could raise Him “with a nature that could not, cannot and will not.”

It is only in very exceptional circumstances that death is welcome. We of the Nazarene Fellowship do not believe that it is a punishment but only the natural termination of a corruptible creature with a limited life-span. Christadelphians however emphatically do regard natural death as the penalty of sin and a punishment incurred by Adam and inherited by all his offspring because they inevitably become sinners personally because of their sinful nature. This they say is our inherent mortality. If this were true, surely simple logic and justice would have required that since Jesus was not a sinner He should not have died at all, far less suffer the death of a criminal. But faced as they are with the fact that He was put to death and being terrified at the concept of a sacrifice with its substitutionary implication, they have elaborated this pathetic theory that His dying was for the purpose of destroying the body which might have caused Him to sin. If it were correct, at least Christ ought to have died a natural death like the majority of men. They are left with the problem of explaining why He was crucified.

Everyone must agree that to suffer a violent, inflicted death is an evil fate, even A.D.Norris in spite of his theory that it brought a “betterment” surely recognises that the awful death Jesus suffered was an undeserved affliction upon an innocent sinless man. In order to be tested and approved, and to be an example to us. Jesus had of necessity to be brought into the world with a nature that could have sinned, and it therefore appears inescapable that to cause Him to be put to death because of His nature was to punish Him for something He could not help or alter. He did the very best that was possible with what He was given by living sinlessly, so why should a just God will Him to die? He was given no choice about the quality of the flesh He was born with, so how could it possibly be just or right to put Him to death to destroy it?

He is perfectly explicit - although He had “dedicated all to God,” He had no choice but to submit Himself to the Cross in order to “renounce what might have made Him do otherwise.” He died, he says, because His Father willed Him to die, but where, we ask, is there any purpose, or reason, or justice in such a Divine judgment upon an innocent, holy man? It is possible that Norris can rationalise such a contradiction in his own mind, and resolve the incongruity of a situation where the extreme punishment of a cruel death is visited upon a man who did no wrong, in order we are told, to ensure that He shall never do what He had never done and which we have no reason to think He would have been likely to do had He lived a normal span or even ten times as long. If the purpose in Jesus’ death was so that He could be raised with a body which could not and will not sin, why could not this have been accomplished in the same way as it will be for those who are alive at His coming and who will be changed in the twinkling of an eye?

So the question still remains for Christadelphians - why did He have to die? And after A.D.Norris’s exposition it gets tougher, not easier for them to answer.

In pursuing the controversy which has now lasted a century, the present writer has designedly emphasized the substitutionary aspect of The Atonement, well-knowing how repugnant the expression is to Christadelphians, because properly understood it is strictly and absolutely true and it brings them right up against the sacrificial principle and forces them either to accept or reject it. Alas, it has to be admitted that most reject it verbally but we have the satisfaction of the knowledge that in their inmost souls they know it is true!

No reasonable Bible reader can deny that when a sin-offering was made, the penalty due to the sinner was inflicted on the innocent victim; or to put it another equally Scriptural way, the life of the offering was accepted instead of the life of the sinner. There are a few eccentrics who deny that this was the principle underlying the law of sacrifice and it would be a waste of time to reason with them; but Christadelphians at one time accepted this. Now, if the killing of a creature like a lamb can be regarded as a punishment, then it is true that in a sin-offering the punishment which the sinner deserved was borne by the innocent victim. But in fact, since a creature has no understanding and they are killed for food without any thought of vindictiveness, its death cannot very well be regarded as a transferred punishment; but it was most definitely a substitute. "The life of all flesh is in the blood thereof, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls." In these modern times, the idea of sacrifice and bloodshedding may be distasteful and foreign to our western ways, but it so happens that the Christian religion is rooted in the Jewish past and our hope of salvation rests on foundations that were laid down by God in the Mosaic Law and those who reject the principles are rejecting the Words of Life. Christadelphians have not yet wholly abandoned the Law and the Prophets for a bloodless western morality like the Churches, but they are well on the way and the clearest evidence of their decline is the mental dishonesty with which they regard the sacrifice of Christ.

The idea of transferred punishment is objectionable and no one now would defend the suggestion that it could serve any good purpose to inflict the penalty due to the guilty upon an innocent victim, but this is not the principle or purpose of sacrifice, and those who raise these objections are presenting a false picture both of what we believe and of what Scripture teaches. Nothing could be clearer evidence that the true sacrificial principle involves the substitution of one thing in the place of another, than the offering of Isaac, the Passover Lamb and the offerings on the Day of Atonement. There was no question of punishment, but the life sacrificed was in the place of those who escaped; and this is how we were saved when Jesus chose voluntarily to give His life as a sacrifice and substitute for the life of Adam and all who share that life. It is reasonable enough to reject the idea that it makes sense or gave God any pleasure to see His innocent Son suffer or that He was inflicting upon Him the punishment deserved by sinners; but it is another thing to reject the view that it was God who gave Him and Jesus who chose of His own free will to give His life as the payment due to Law to set free those who were in debt.

We do not believe in vicarious punishment but we do believe in self-sacrifice, and it ill becomes those who object to the view that Christ literally bore the penalty due to sinners because it would be unjust for God to punish Him, to put forward the view, as Norris does, that God required Him to suffer death to destroy His nature. If there is any distinction in objectionableness it would be hard to say what it is. God did not require His death; God did not bring about His death; God did not need to destroy His body to prevent Him sinning nor did Jesus have to die to prove that He was obedient unto death.

What God did was to send His Son into the world to save sinners - He gave Him to the world. And what did the world do with Him? Wicked men - of their own will and volition and out of envy and hate - put Him to death. It was not God, it was men. The fact that with foreknowledge God knew what would happen and that if Jesus was left in their hands He would be put to death and that if Jesus found the courage and faith to carry out His Father's purpose He could save the human race from eternal death must not be transformed into the heresy that He had to die because His nature was obnoxious to His Creator and Father. He died for us.

It was an odd coincidence that while writing I received a note from Brother A.H.Broughton enclosing the following:-

"A Ransom For Many." Excerpt from The Testimony, 1973, page 188:-

"What a difference a right understanding of these prepositions can make. The Son of Man came... to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

It is very easy to read this precious saying as meaning that Christ died on behalf of many. But this would require Greek *'huper'* and the word is *'anti,'* over against, opposite to, corresponding to; as in "an eye for an eye," or "Archelaus in the room of his father Herod." So here the somewhat unexpected meaning suggested is "One ransom sacrifice" instead of the many offered under the Law of Moses." - H.A.Whittaker.

That suggestion will not hold good, for the context speaks of ministering to others, of being "servant to all, etc." and has nothing to do with sacrifices.

But it is interesting to note that H.A.Whittaker agrees with the true meaning of *'anti'* – 'instead of.'

A.H.B.

This identical point was made in one of our pamphlets years ago and if it is applied honestly it proves beyond a doubt that Jesus knew and was telling His disciples beforehand that this was the duty or the command which He had been given - to lay down His life as a redemptive sacrifice to fulfil the purpose of God and justify His forbearance in passing over the sins of the past and declare His righteousness. It is again a manifestation of the lengths to which writers will go that Whittaker admits that the passage clearly means that Jesus died instead of and not on behalf of and then falsifies it by suggesting that the many were the sacrifices under the Law and not the people of whom He was speaking in the context. If such people perish from unbelief who can they blame but themselves when they will twist the testimony so unscrupulously?

As for A.D.Norris, the anger I felt against him for what he said in the past has turned rather to pity - pity that a man of his ability should be so blind. If he no longer speaks of the Devil inherent in Jesus it is evident that his beliefs are not at all changed. He is still convinced of the doctrine of the physical Fall of Man and the obnoxiousness of human nature. It is saddening to see that he has grown older but no wiser and has progressed only to the extent that he has recognised the need to develop a less offensive way of promulgating the same pernicious heresy which has been the curse of Christadelphianism since they allowed the words of men to supersede the Word of God. He has talent, but it has never enabled him to see that the belief that sin became a literal element in our flesh is some of the mixture in that golden cup with which all the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunken; it only enables him, as he has done in "The Believer," to advocate it more deviously and disarmingly.

Christadelphians think that they are the only sect with the truth, but in fact there are several groups in the U.S.A. which accept the Bible as inspired and have the same basis. The only doctrine which is now unique to Christadelphians is their teaching that the Crucifixion was the judgment of God upon sinful human nature in the person of His Son as a representative. And this is a uniqueness of shame, because it is false and dishonouring. It brands the community as the Scribes and Pharisees of these last days and unless they repent and revise it they must surely find themselves in the same condemnation when they face Jesus returned to the earth.

If, as A.D.Norris, W.F.Barling and H.P.Mansfield insistently maintain, it was right, just and necessary for Jesus to be put to death for His own salvation, they are faced with the terrifying problem of where they would stand if the circumstances of Jesus' first appearance were to be happening in our day. Readers should ask them to go into this and explain themselves. They would of course evade the issue by dismissing it as a hypothetical question, but to refuse to face it is a self-condemnation because it involves a vital truth about our attitude towards Christ and one's eternal destiny could depend upon the answer.

It is not suggested that they would be amongst the mockers, but they regard themselves as being on the side of God in the matter and they have declared categorically that God willed that He should die because His nature could have caused Him to sin. Therefore, from the inevitable logic of their own doctrine, they would be obliged to be in favour of His death. Clearly also, they would not be in the streets with the mob crying, "Crucify him, crucify him" because they honestly believe they love Him. Where then would they be? Obviously they would be sitting in committee with Caiaphas and the Editors and Arranging Brethren, declaring that according to the B.A.S.F. it was expedient for Him to die! There is no escape. The clinical coolness of the Norris theory is no less deadly than the burning hatred of those who spat in His face!

If it was really right for Jesus to be put to death to bring about the betterment of His body, those who crucified Him were doing what was right, they were carrying out the will of God. But the Apostles declared it to be a criminal injustice and so do we. It was a crime which God certainly foresaw, but it was only allowed to happen because Jesus had understood the plan of Redemption revealed in the Old Testament and had signified His willingness to bring it into operation by surrendering His life for sinners.

Jesus was a man and a Jew. A.D.Norris solution of the problem of his humanity by killing Him is the same in principle as Hitler's solution of the problem of Jewishness, This is a grievous parallel to have to draw upon the views of a fellow-Christian but they are the facts. On the plain evidence of his own propaganda, the philosophy of Dr Norris has more in common with that of Dr Goebbels than with the Scriptures. Whether it be the one life of Jesus or the 6,000,000 lives of German Jews, genocide is an unspeakable obscenity and a crime which we compound if we teach that it is only possible to improve people by murdering them. To put a man to death for what he is, irrespective of what he has done is the action of a fiend and only a psychopath would defend it. To reduce The Atonement to the level advocated in "The Believer" by A.D.Norris must surely incur the wrath of all heaven.

When the nails were driven through His hands and His feet and He began to suffer the fearful agony of a lingering death, the one grain of comfort in His mind could have been the conviction that people would now be convinced of His unselfish goodness; they must now believe in Him - in His loving self-sacrifice by which He manifested His Father's love and mercifulness in this terrible tragedy so plainly set forth to the whole world. Surely, He must have thought, all generations to come will now recognise Him as the Saviour, the Good Shepherd, who voluntarily went to His death, not to destroy Himself, not to demonstrate God's anger or His abhorrence of the human nature which He had created, but to GIVE Himself, to forfeit His life as the price of our redemption from the bondage of sin. He died, not for betterment, but to pay the debt of sinners with His own life blood. If He had not done so we should all perish. "For greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Let us ask ourselves a few questions. In His last agonies, could He ever have contemplated for one moment that after nearly 20 centuries there would arise a sect, naming themselves as His brethren, who would have developed a theory that this was for His own benefit - for the betterment of Himself? He knew what was in man but we can hope and pray that this bitterness at least was spared Him - and yet - from His place in heaven, this is what He sees today in the world of Christadelphian magazines and preaching. He mourned over the plight of the people of Jerusalem in their rejection of His message - how He must marvel now at the perversity of some of us Gentiles, professing to follow what The Bible reveals but still clinging to the error of Original Sin because it is embedded in the writings of "the pioneers" and in consequence destroying the meaning of those very Words of Life upon which alone we can have hope!

Reader; do you really believe what they are telling you, or are you awed by their scholarship and mesmerised by their words? It is your hope which is at stake. What about asking your leading brethren and speakers to account for the fact that in their theory of the Atonement there is no place for the word sacrifice? Ask yourself, do you think that Jesus gave Himself, the just for the unjust, as the Apostle Peter says, or do you think He had to die to get rid of His own evil nature, as A.D.Norris affirms. Had He no choice whatsoever but to suffer death because He was born with human nature, as you are supposed to believe, or did He lay down His life of His own free will to accomplish our salvation, justifying the forbearance of God and showing His willingness to forgive the sins of those who believe in Jesus?

Ask some of these questions and think them out for yourself. The answers are in the Bible, though not always on the surface. A good place to begin is with the address of Peter in Acts 3:12-26.

Ernest Brady (1974)

ADDENDUM

Since writing I am informed by the Author that "Understanding The Bible" is still available but that the expression objected to has been deleted to remove one of the minor causes of friction.

E.B.