

The Norris Confession

Being well aware that there are more than a few Christadelphians who now repudiate the views held by some of their number, it is with no pleasure that we set about the task of critically examining one of the newest examples of the shocking perversions which are advanced in their name. This is not simply another attempt to combat a system of belief with which we profoundly disagree, but a sincere appeal to all who hope to be justified at the coming of the Lord to consider earnestly the horrible monstrosity which has been presented as the purpose of God when He entrusted to His own Son the salvation of man.

A.D.Norris has been writing a series of articles called a Personal Confession of Faith, in which he has reviewed the B.A.S.F. and constructed a number of simplified clauses based upon it, no doubt with the possibility in mind that sometime they may be adopted as a modernised Statement of Faith.

We found little to criticize in the first two articles; in the third we found one striking and fundamental contradiction and also what is perhaps the most amazing denigration of the victory of Jesus Christ which can ever have disgraced Christian writing; but as the same errors from the same source have been dealt with in previous works these were not taken up. In January, however, the fourth article has been published, under the title "I believe in Christ crucified" and this we find to be such a complete and horrid perversion of the truth that some effort must be made to expose it. That it has ever appeared in a magazine whose name claims brotherhood in Christ is to the eternal shame of those who published it and of those who read it and either see no fault in it or fail to protest against it.

Having mentioned the complaints we have against the third article, these will be dealt with first. On page 533 of "The Christadelphian" of December 1963, referring to himself A.D. Morris writes:-

"I acknowledge myself to be a sinner, owing to the sin of my fleshly father, Adam, a disposition that I am unable in myself to resist or conquer."

This is an honest confession and one which, as to the fact itself we all have to make. What is not honest, or true, is the reason assigned and the explanatory phrase. According to Scripture, the commandments of God are not grievous; there is no single one of them which human beings cannot keep if they wish. We are told moreover, that if we resist temptation the devil will flee from us; we are told that with every temptation God will also provide a way of escape, "that ye may be able to bear it." Our disposition is not something which we inherit, fixed for all time, but something we can change at our own will. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." It may well be true that some people are more disposed to evil than others, or that the temptations which some people suffer are more severe than those of others, but one is accountable only for the talents given and there is ample and clear evidence that reformation is possible to the very worst of us. Therefore, to lay blame upon Adam for a disposition which one can change if one chooses is not reasonable and certainly not Scriptural. This in itself would have been complete enough a condemnation of A.D.Norris's Confession, but since it is a very widespread delusion enshrined in The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, it is not perhaps a matter of world-shaking importance that many Christadelphians also hold it. It is the evil conclusions it leads to that matter. What is amazing however is that only four lines earlier in the same Confession, referring now to Jesus, he says:-

"He shared with man the infirmities and desires of the flesh. I believe that he was tempted in all points like other men, but overcame sin by submitting himself to the will of the Father."

Very well! He shared the infirmities and desires of the flesh. He was tempted like other men; like A.D.Norris himself in fact! How was it then He was able to overcome, whereas A.D.Norris says

he is unable even to resist, not to mention overcoming? It is perfectly true that Jesus submitted Himself to the will of His Father. But what prevents A.D.Norris from submitting himself to the will of the Father? Why cannot he resist and conquer his inborn disposition if Jesus had the same inborn disposition, the same infirmities and desires, was tempted in the same way and yet succeeded in overcoming? There is of course a hidden rock here; we know where it lies and so does he, but he has sailed around it because he knows that when it appears it wrecks the Christadelphian ship, knocking the bottom out of his affirmation (page 532), that he believes that Jesus suffered temptation in the “absolute sense” and “bore our human nature intact.” Exactly what he means by absolute sense and intact here is not clear, but the intention is to affirm the belief that the probationary experience of Jesus was the same as that of any other man. Yet we know that if he were candid he would be obliged to admit that he does not so believe. If he is asked to explain why Jesus could overcome whereas he cannot, he will reply that it was because He was the Son of God and therefore He had the moral strength to resist sin which no man with a human father can have. Generally Christadelphian writers make no secret of this belief, since they know of no other reason why He was born of the Holy Spirit, nor how He could have overcome His sinful flesh had He been Joseph’s son; and they profess to be unable to see how it makes any difference. From the fact that A.D.Norris has made no mention of it, we assume that he at least appreciates that if Jesus was endowed with a higher moral nature or power of resistance because He was God’s Son, there can have been very little virtue in His obedience and no sense whatever in His claim to be our exemplar. The omission is a tribute to his shrewdness but reflects no credit on his sincerity.

In any other sphere, philosophy, physics, law or in fact any subject but religion the presence of such a fallacy in a thesis would condemn it out of hand. For some reason, because he is dealing with the things belonging to God, the writer feels free to ignore the ordinary rules of logic and reason, and makes two completely contradictory statements, expecting both to be accepted. Let him explain, without his studied circumlocution, how he can at the same time affirm that Jesus was the same as other men, was tempted like other men and yet avoided sin completely, while he himself is incapable of obedience. Either his facts about Jesus are wrong or his facts about himself are.

Consciousness of the threat of the hidden rock is evident again when he dares to go to the length of disparaging the victory which Jesus won - an admission that he really believes it was God, not Jesus who did it. On page 533, line 6 from the bottom, he “confesses” probably more than he intended when he wrote:-

“It declares (this new Confession of Faith) that his freedom from sin is not to be lauded as a magnificent human achievement, as though man, any man, by himself could do this thing; the sinlessness rests on the willing surrender by Jesus of his own will to that of his Father, so that God might preserve him against evil with the full consent of Jesus’s obedient mind.”

This abominable passage is quoted in full so that no one may ever say that we have misquoted or misrepresented him. Read again those shabby words “his freedom from sin is not to be lauded as a magnificent human achievement.” Why not? Was not Jesus a man then? Whatever are we doing when we sing “Worthy the Lamb that died they cry, to be exalted thus”? Oh, no, His freedom from sin is not to be lauded thus. “Jesus is worthy to receive honour and power divine”? Oh, no, His freedom from sin was no magnificent human achievement. “When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of Glory died...” My poor deluded brothers, he says, this Prince of Glory idea is misdirected – Jesus’ sinlessness is not to be lauded in this way; it was God who preserved Him from evil. There is something more than a shade queer about a mind which can evolve this detestable canting Judas kiss without realizing the parallel with those who in their desperate vexation admonished some simple souls like ourselves, “Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner.” The intention and the considerations are identical - the motive a little different but the effect no less reprehensible.

If there are words really adequate to deal with this detraction from the work of Jesus with the severity it deserves, they are not in the writer's vocabulary. It reduces Jesus to nothing but a puppet. He says, "as though man, any man, by himself, could do this thing." Does he in fact believe that Jesus was a man? Is he honest when he says he believes that Jesus was a man like other men? No one would be so foolish as to assert that any man could have done what Jesus did, but His unique glory is that He was a man and He did it. Was He not also "by Himself"? Angels ministered to Him on certain occasions but He was never dragged out of the way of temptation by supernatural power. At the critical hours He fought and wept and prayed alone. At the greatest crisis of His suffering - who was with Him then? "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Even God was not preserving Him from evil in that dark hour. Is it not indeed the one glorious and humbling fact of our faith that Jesus in fact did do it - that He overcame - by Himself - alone? "I have trodden the wine press alone." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Even A.D.Norris's own admissions contradict his argument; he says Jesus surrendered His will to the will of God so that God might preserve Him. So that much at least Jesus did for Himself - He surrendered His will. What more could He have done? A.D.Norris is aware of the febleness of his case here and tacks on a supporting piece; "God did it with the consent of Jesus's obedient mind." Is this any help? Who made His mind obedient? Jesus did it Himself, of His own choice and determination. Even indiscriminating obduracy is obliged to admit as much, so what is left of the argument that no man could do it?

He has at least the grace to select an archaic word with which to disparage Jesus' sinlessness - it is not to be lauded, a concession perhaps to the shame which he ought to feel in daring to say so. Had he used a term in more common use and said his freedom from sin is not to be praised, or admired, or esteemed, his readers might have been shocked into protest and to wonder what had changed since they sang "Oh, the rapturous, blissful story, spoken to Emmanuel's praise, and the strains so full of glory, which immortal voices raise." How will A.D.Norris set about silencing those immortal voices celebrating the praise of our great Deliverer, whose victory over sin alas, is not to be lauded as a magnificent achievement? How indeed? He will first have to revise not the Statement of Faith only but also the Psalms and the Prophets. After this almost lunatic disparagement of what Jesus did in His life he might not feel even that undertaking too great; but we must now turn to what he has to confess about his beliefs regarding Jesus's death and this we shall find is, if possible, even worse.

CRUCIFIXION

Briefly, A.D.Norris believes that human nature is so depraved and prone to sin that it is fit only for destruction. He however goes further than most in his belief that because he bore this evil nature Jesus welcomed death as the only escape from its temptations; that He submitted to it as a demonstration of the only way in which the evil desires of our human flesh may be conquered. We believe this to be a fair summary of his belief, but it is intended to quote verbatim from his article, so that the reader will be able to judge the truth of it. It is our contention that this version of the sacrifice of Christ is an utter and complete travesty which will not stand up to scriptural investigation and ought therefore to be denounced and forsworn by every true brother in Christ. It professes to be based upon the B.A.S.F. which many now realize is very far from being sound in many directions, but this gloss upon it surpasses anything we had ever imagined possible. In our view, if A.D.Norris's Confession of Faith is the truth and human nature what he asserts, then it would be the right and proper course for every faithful believer who hopes for salvation, to commit suicide at the first convenient opportunity. Once he has been baptised, the sooner he is dead the better. This is what he believes that Jesus did and he being our example that is what we ought to do. No doubt many will think this a very extravagant exaggeration of the case but we think that an impartial consideration of the arguments advanced makes such a conclusion inescapable.

He begins by quoting extracts from Clauses 8,9,10 and 12 of the Statement of faith and these we need not repeat; he then composes a clause which he considers embodies them. He says "Our big problem with these words is to make them real to ourselves." Surely if they were words of truth there

would be no such problem; it is a problem only because the B.A.S.F. contains much which can never be made real to anyone who expects to find order, logic and justice as the basic principles of God's operations.

However, A.D.Norris is prepared to make the attempt to establish a basis of reason and so he writes, page 15 (January, 1964):-

“The Death which he accepted was not something strange to his nature but something which, as appropriate to that nature, he accepted willingly in the prime of his mortal life.”

There are two assertions here about Jesus' death, and both of them are manifestly false. First, the death which He died, by crucifixion, most emphatically was strange to His nature. There is nothing in man's nature which makes death by crucifixion appropriate to it. Under Jewish law a presumptuous sinner, one who cursed his parents, one who blasphemed or one who murdered, was to be put to death. But of which of these crimes was Jesus guilty? Under Roman law insurrection and treason were capital crimes punishable by crucifixion; was Jesus guilty of either of these? If there was a death which can be said to be appropriate to his nature, then it would be death from old age or disease, but A.D.Norris himself rules this out, saying “There must be no waiting for old age or disease or accident to overtake him - no fighting against death as other men may fight against their assassins.” Which is in fact to say that He must seek death, self- immolation or suicide!

Now, it is certainly a fact that Jesus was a corruptible man and capable of dying; but so also was Adam when he was created and before he sinned, so that Jesus did not inherit a corruptible nature because of Adam's sin. If this comes as a surprise to any reader he might notice that in the same issue of “The Christadelphian” L.G.Sargent, in “That Holy Thing” says:

“Adam was formed a living animal, and therefore capable both of disobedience and of death. Had he not been capable of disobeying there would have been no point in giving him a law. Had he been incapable of death there might have been an immortal sinner.”

This is a very remarkable admission, which proves that he has learned something from reading the literature of the Nazarene Fellowship; but with it he has destroyed the whole foundation of A.D.Norris's conception of the Atonement. His case is that it was the capacity in Jesus for disobedience which required His death, yet here L.G.Sargent admits that the capacity for disobedience existed in Adam while he was in the very good state in which he was created, before sin occurred and before death for sin came into man's experience. The utmost that can be said is that since Jesus was a man He had a natural life span and might eventually have died of old age. But He proved Himself under test obedient and worthy of immortality; thus God could not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. It is true that natural death is the normal end of human nature, but Jesus's death was not natural, it was inflicted, and that by the most dreadful and prolonged suffering. How utterly wrong to affirm that such a death was appropriate to His nature.

Second; Jesus did not accept death willingly in the prime of life. Very far from it. He accepted it voluntarily, rejecting the deliverance He had the power to call to His aid, because it was to save us; but this is an entirely different thing. From the moment when He first realized who He was and understood the part He had to take if the purpose of God was to succeed, the dread of the fiery ordeal which He saw before Him weighed ever more heavily upon Him. Far from accepting death willingly, He willed to be delivered from it. “Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me.” Does that sound like a readiness to throw His life away because death was appropriate to the nature He bore? How dare anyone write anything so contrary to the true facts? “Not my will but Thine be done.” Does this suggest a welcome to death because it was in His nature? Never.

He continues, and here is the mischief, giving what he thinks was the reason why Jesus died willingly:

“He did so because this was the only way in which the dispositions of that nature could be finally conquered.”

Here is an assertion which is contrary to every principle and lesson of Scripture. If there is one thing above all others which the accounts of the life of Jesus prove to us, it is that He conquered the dispositions of human nature in His life, that is, by living, not by dying. In every test He overcame His temptations by the exercise of His own will, by His determination to do the things which pleased His Father. Certainly He asked for help and strength in prayer and no doubt He received it. So can we. What A.D.Norris says is completely false, a total misrepresentation of everything for which the life of Jesus stands.

So far from death being the only way in which the dispositions of His nature could be finally conquered the reverse is true - if He had not during His life conquered every temptation which beset Him, by resisting and overcoming it, His death would not have been an escape for Him and it most certainly could not have been a redemptive sacrifice. A.D.Norris of course recognizes that Jesus was sinless, but to him this was not sufficient. His theory is that the simple fact that He was human flesh demanded His death, unavoidably and inescapably, because the flesh is susceptible to temptation.

Page 16, line 18 from bottom:

“There was no end to temptation so long as he existed in human flesh un-mortified. The one possible escape from this condition lay through his death.”

Either the writer has some source of information other than the Gospel's and the Apostles, or else he has found something in them which we have never discovered. The alternative is that he is wrong. Our reading leads us to the belief that after experiencing a series of temptations, of which the three in the wilderness are probably more of what may be described as representational than specific, our Lord so dedicated himself to His mission, resorting constantly to God in prayer and to the Scriptures in meditation, that what are termed the grosser appetites never more assailed Him. We have dealt earlier with the question of temptation in general and how it can be met and what applies to us applies with greater force to Jesus. It is insulting to Him and against every evidence to affirm that there was no end to temptation so long as Jesus existed alive. How can he know - how could any-one know excepting Jesus himself? His temptations, those He referred to when He said to His disciples “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations,” were the trials of faith and patience which He experienced encountering the unbelief of His nation, the hostility of the Scribes and the scorn of the people who should have acclaimed Him. Even His death was not really an escape from these temptations, for doubtless He suffers them still; and men who write like A.D.Norris must aggravate and add to them.

Not only is it false of Jesus that the only possible escape from temptation is to die; it is false even of good men and women, whose lives belie Him, even though they could not claim the perfection which Jesus attained. In Hebrews, some “of whom the world was not worthy” are named; there were others, not listed, amongst whom surely the Apostle Paul must be included and many since, unnamed and unknown except to God, real practising Christians whose characters have been so ennobled by their faith and love, that the very idea that anything in the world or in themselves could cause them to fall from their own steadfastness verges on absurdity. But that is besides the point and perhaps open to debate; we are concerned with Jesus and the purpose of His death.

The Apostle James tells us how to put an end to temptation for the time, by resisting the devil so that he will flee from us. But he also says count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations - he does not exhort us to seek death as the only escape. Another Apostle tells us “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to men, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear, but will with the temptation make also a way of escape.” If there is always a way of escape even for one weak in faith if he chooses to take it, how dare A.D.Norris affirm of Jesus, who was strong in faith, that there was no way of escape for Him except

through death? The records of His life prove the contrary - that the way of escape is to love God and keep His commandments; this is the message that ought to be preached to this generation, not the discouraging doctrine that it is hopeless to expect people to live good decent lives because the evil inheritance in their flesh makes it an impossible task. It is small wonder that the standard of behaviour of Christadelphian youth leaves something to be desired when such pernicious teaching is put before them by men with the reputation of the author of these articles! This aspect of the matter is very bad, since the real responsibility for sin is thrown upon God, for He alone could have created man in such a way that sin could become a fixed principle of his flesh. It is quite unfair to blame Adam; he sinned certainly but he had no power to implant evil in our flesh; only God could have done that. But the worse aspect is that A.D.Norris's theory supplies a reason for the death of Christ which is a wrong and degrading one and thereby inhibits consideration of the right one, which is glorious and ennobling.

Page 15, line 36; he says:-

“From now on (i.e., after he was dead) he would be out of reach of sin.”

Really, someone ought to tell him that Jesus was out of reach of sin from His very first consciousness, not because He was different from us or incapable of sinning, but because He would not disobey! If He had not been out of reach of sin during His life, His death could not have fulfilled the sacrificial types of the Mosaic Law, which required the offering of a legally clean animal unblemished in every way. If Jesus was within reach of sin - to adopt the writer's expression - until He died, then at the time of His death He must have been legally or physically defiled or blemished and therefore unacceptable as an offering. Jesus was able to challenge His enemies and demand “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” A.D.Norris would have replied, “No one, up to the present; but while there is life there is always just a chance. You might succumb to the dispositions of your flesh and lapse into lust, or greed, or hatred. Only when you are dead can you be finally sure you will not sin, and therefore you must die. Because you are cursed with a nature which in other men leads to sin, you must welcome death as your way of escape and as an example to us of the only means by which we may overcome our sinful nature.” In his last paragraph of page 15 he adds:-

“In accepting death as the only means whereby he could destroy that which had the power of death, he confessed before God and man that sin must not only be resisted, but its power within oneself admitted and given over to condemnation.”

This is really fantastic - a complete fabrication and a terrible impeachment of the justice of God. Man is as God made him; no one can help the kind of body or flesh or nature he is born with. Even supposing it were true that the power of sin is within us, as A.D.Norris asserts, what more could a man do than resist it? Is it the will of God that we have to welcome death because our constitution makes it possible, probable or even certain that we shall sin? Utter nonsense! There is in us not only the capacity for evil but also the capacity for good. The same constitution which allows us to sin also allows us to obey - there is a choice open to us. The life of Jesus is the proof that there is nothing in the nature of man which prevents him from obeying all the time, from being wholly good, for Jesus did it. If you ask why we do not do it, the answer is that we do not try as hard as Jesus did or as hard as we could or ought. Even if it were true that as a result of his disobedience Adam passed on to all his children a defiled nature (and it is not true but completely false) what could a just God require of a man more than that he should resist and overcome temptations as they arise? “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly.” No, says this new oracle, this is not enough, he must give himself over to condemnation, he must commit suicide, for death is the only means whereby he can destroy the power of sin within himself! Let anyone try to discover a passage of Scripture to justify such incredible foolishness or to prove that God requires anything more from anyone than loving obedience. It certainly passes comprehension that any man should have the audacity to suggest that the death of Christ was to meet the requirement of God that the human body must be repudiated and consigned to death because the lusts which are natural to it and vital for the preservation of life can lead to transgression of law if not controlled. No more preposterous theory

has ever been invented than this, that after he had resisted and overcome every temptation, exhibited perfect obedience, trust and love, he was required to consign himself to death because his body might have been the means or cause of sin!

Turning again to page 16, line 2, we read:-

“The righteous repudiation of sin in the death of Jesus, (exalted) the righteousness of God, at the same time as it lay down the nature of fallen man.”

Two things must be said of the passage. As has been shown whatever the purpose of the death of Jesus, it cannot have been a repudiation of sin, for He was without sin. His nature was indeed the same nature as the nature of fallen man. but since He Himself was sinless it was impossible for Him to repudiate sin. What He did was to condemn sin, in others, by living Himself in human flesh, a perfect life. By His own life he demonstrated that obedience is possible to men who are flesh. His death was not for the purpose of destroying a body of sin. It was to give Himself as a sin-offering to make atonement for the sins of all mankind. Nor yet, again, could His death exalt the righteousness of God if it was imposed upon Him because of the nature He was born with. That would have exalted unrighteousness; it would have been utterly unjust and cruel, because no one ought in common justice to be punished for what he cannot help.

He writes, page 16, line 14 from bottom:-

"It remained for Jesus to accept the situation in the spirit which fulfilled the Father's intention... there must be no fighting against death... no waiting for old age, or disease, or accident to overtake him, so that death was his conqueror and not his victim."

If the words “It remained for him to accept the situation” mean anything they mean that He had no choice about the matter - the situation in which He found Himself demanded his death - He had to accept it. But it is absurd to say this and at the same time say that He died voluntarily. It is obvious that if the only escape from the condition in which He found Himself lay through death, it cannot be true to say that His death was in any sense a sacrifice for others. It must be admitted that A.D.Norris does not say this - that Jesus's death was a sacrifice - and possibly he does not even believe it either; indeed his own arguments cancel out any element of sacrifice in the case. But if it is not the teaching of Scripture that Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin we might as well give up. Unquestionably the great majority of Christadelphians believe sincerely that it was a sacrifice and would be horrified if they realized the implications of what he is teaching.

The difference can be reduced to seven words - suicide for himself or sacrifice for others? This is the dilemma and the damnation of A.D.Norris's Confession of Faith. If it is true it completely nullifies any imagined sacrificial purpose in the death of Christ and leaves its professors with a sin-stricken leader whose act of self-immolation simply underlines their own defeatism.

A MORBID PSYCHOSIS

In reading this strange and sad revelation and trying to account for the intellectual sickness which seems to lie behind it, the greatest problem of all is how a sincere student could ever have developed such a fantastic misconception. After much thought we have reached the conclusion that the explanation is a psychological one; the issue has gone beyond a simple matter of doctrinal error which one might hope to resolve by Scriptural discussion and has become an obsession. No one could deny that the Confession reveals a preoccupation with the badness of human nature which to say the least is unusual and might even be said to border on morbidity. In his view, the trouble is not with the way people behave but with their physical constitution, which he blames for their misbehaviour. All temptations and all resultant sins are for him simply a manifestation of the intrinsic bad quality of

human flesh, so that even if a man is good in character he is still depraved in nature. It matters not a whit in his view, that people sometimes act honestly, nobly and unselfishly; they are acting against the grain of their basic nature, which is temptable and therefore bad and ought to be destroyed. This is so completely alien to reason, to fact and to Scripture that one may be forgiven for wondering about the psychological condition of one who says so. Consider simply the words of Jesus:- "For every tree is known by his fruit... an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit... a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good..." and conversely. There is no good tree in Norris's creation. We have read in other places references of his to the human body as unlovely, ugly, unseemly and fit only for condemnation; in the article under consideration he describes it as "stricken with sin and death in consequence of our heritage."

Approaching the problem of Jesus's death he promotes this into the proposition

"We are to recognize for ourselves the truths concerning our nature which he admitted for his."

One would have thought it would be obvious to the feeblest mind, that if an individual can be consistently good, because he chooses to be so and because he acts in accordance with the principles he knows to be right, then his nature cannot be fundamentally bad.

There can be only one explanation. In the very foundation of Christadelphian doctrine there is a flaw, an illogical inference which, in the same way as a seismic fracture in the rock strata of the earth confuses the geological record, has distorted every deduction based upon it. This is the doctrine of physical condemnation. It is so deeply embedded in tradition (read Clause 3 of the B.A.S.F.) that it is now unlikely to be expunged, but its subterranean effects crop out in unexpected places producing contradiction and inconsistency and raising questions which cannot be answered; but the worst distortion appears when it comes to the surface, so to speak, in the Garden of Gethsemane and produces the grotesque caricature seen in this Confession of Faith. We have formed the opinion that its author is aware of the existence of this basic fault in the faith into which he was born, and that the extreme position revealed in the outrageous assertions he has made is an attempt to compensate his failure to resolve it. In the Jargon of professional psychology it might be diagnosed as a form of guilt complex. We regard it as more probably evidence of a sub-conscious mental conflict arising from realization of inconsistency rather than from any abnormal feelings of personal unworthiness. It must not be thought that we question the sincerity with which this view is held; or that we deny the smoothness with which it is presented, but we can hardly help comparing the cleverness with which he defends such an abhorrent and depressing view with his stupidity in failing to recognize its too obvious falsity. Our real complaint is that he makes a pretence of Scriptural evidence which is not there at all. On the contrary, not only is positive evidence conspicuously absent but every clear line of Scriptural argument refutes his contention. The Apostle Paul writes. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church." If our flesh were the disgusting thing of this confession we ought to hate it; and he certainly gives the impression of hating his own. Be that as it may, and although he holds and can promulgate such a repugnant view of our condition, we would dare to affirm that 99 out of every 100 Christadelphians prove by their life and attitude that they do not share it. The majority of normal people value their lives and do their best to prolong and preserve them; and so they should. Even more should this apply to enlightened lovers of God. The Apostle says again, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? If any man defile the temple of God him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." The majority of those whom he represents do not hate their bodies or despise their lives; they enjoy living and so they should. No one would deny that there is much evil and suffering in the world and that most of it is caused by man; but even so, he is still "made in the image of God," with the potentiality of unlimited goodness as well as evil. If it were not so it was a mockery for Jesus to say "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Even the existence of the last enemy, death, as a necessary fact in a corruptible creation as L.G.Sargent has acknowledged, does not make life utterly worthless. There are also, it must be admitted, evils and catastrophes over which man has not the control which he has over himself, but he still loves life. The chances of everyday existence

and the final inevitability of leaving it do not prevent the majority of normal people from enjoying life. This was the design and intention of God and only a strangely aberrant mind could ever doubt it. He has created us with the capacity to appreciate good and beautiful things and filled the world with the means of satisfying our needs and desires without harming ourselves or anyone else. There is much evil and unloveliness in much of humanity, but we saw in Jesus what humanity can and ought to be, and we should not become so obsessed with badness as to forget that a human being is the most wonderful of God's creations, designed to reflect His glory and enjoy His blessings. The Apostle says again, "I beseech you therefore, present your bodies a living (not dying) sacrifice, holy, (not defiled) acceptable (not repudiated) unto God (not unto death) which is your reasonable service." It is scarcely possible to imagine anything more damaging to His goodness and loving kindness and more discouraging to human endeavour than the theory that He has caused us to inherit from Adam, "a disposition which we are unable to resist or conquer" and from which death alone will deliver us. When Christian writers can evolve such God-dishonouring and distorted theories and put them forward as the Christian Gospel, it is hardly to be wondered at that intelligent, thoughtful people turn away from religion altogether and take up such sad substitutes as Humanism and Yoga.

Sufficient has now been said in answer to A.D.Norris's Confession of Faith to convince anyone open to conviction that it ought to be rejected, but it would be hardly helpful to leave the matter thus, destroying what he has propounded without replacing it with something better. In fact however, throughout this paper, in dealing with the points raised many indications have already been given of the right direction. Indeed, the simplest believer, who without going into the why and wherefore of it, accepts Jesus' death as having been a sacrifice for sinners is in infinitely better case than an intellectual who can write an explanation with the appearance of plausibility in which sacrificial meaning is completely eliminated. The simple faith of the one may suffice to obtain the forgiveness which the scholarly perversity of the other may forfeit. But if there is a proper explanation of the sacrifice of Christ who would not rather know what it is than remain in ignorance? There is also a great responsibility upon us, not only for what we ourselves believe, but also for what we allow to be preached in our name. It is one thing to prefer a simple faith to controversy but quite another to close our eyes to blatant perversion for lack of the courage to denounce it.

THE LAMB OF GOD

It is recorded that on the road to Emmaus "beginning at Moses and the prophets, Jesus expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." It is a remarkable fact that in the whole of the article containing this Confession of Faith there is only one indirect reference to these Scriptures and this is in order to differentiate between sacrifice under the Law and the principle underlying the death of Christ. It is true that at the end he claims an omnibus reference to "the actual records in all the gospels," but it would have been more to the point if he had made some attempt to show from actual Scriptures how his theory can possibly be accepted by anyone who believes that God acts justly and reasonably. If Jesus expounded concerning Himself out of Moses and the prophets is it not passing strange that there is not so much as a hint in this confession that anything in the Old Testament has any bearing upon the matter? Indeed, the one word without which it is practically impossible for a believer to speak of Jesus's death - the word sacrifice - is not once used. As for discovering and applying the principles underlying the laws of sacrifice and sin-offering, they might as well never have been written.

The latest prophet who spoke concerning Jesus, was John the Baptist, who said of Him, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." This announcement, so close to the actual event and in the presence of the one immediately concerned, ought to be the clearest. Yet instead of focusing attention upon the badness of human nature and the impossibility of escape from the evil dispositions of the flesh except by dying, it takes us straight back to the law of sacrifice under which a sinner was delivered from death by the offering of an innocent, spotless creature in his stead - something completely different. If anyone had brought to the priest as his offering a defiled or

deformed creature he would have aggravated his guilt; every sin-offering had to be clean and perfect of its kind and of a legally clean type, to be accepted. How then could the Lamb of God take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself if that self was unclean and imperfect? John the Baptist knew better, because he had seen the Spirit lighting on Him and had heard the words, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Yet here is a man confessing that he believes God required His death because He was displeased with the nature in which He was born!

Before we turn to Moses to find the answer to the problem, there is a passage in Hebrews which summarizes what the Jews were expected to learn from the law of sacrifice. "This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you... and almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." It was a principle they understood, because they knew the historical facts upon which the ceremonial was based. They knew that in their natural state they were alienated from God and stood in need of redemption. This had been brought home to them, both nationally in the Passover and individually by the Ransom money paid for every soul. The deliverance from Egypt, in which they were brought out of slavery by the killing of the Passover Lamb was more than a mere event in their nation's history; it was a national analogy with the bondage and deliverance of the human race. To understand how humanity came into the condition from which it needed deliverance by bloodshedding and purchase, we have to go back to the beginning and decide what really happened and what we are intended to learn from it.

The Fall of Man is always thought to have been a fall from a good nature to a bad one, or physical condemnation. In fact, the only change was in man's relationship to God. So long as they were obedient they were in harmony with Him. When they disobeyed they were estranged from Him.

When our first parents had been placed under a law requiring obedience on pain of death and had disobeyed it, they knew that they deserved to die. But if the penalty had been inflicted they would have been put to death and would have perished, making an end of the human race, for we are all descended from them. Instead of this, in mercy they entered upon a second probation, offering the hope of eternal life in spite of sin, upon a principle of faith; and at the same time establishing a basis upon which a similar hope could be extended to all their offspring. We know this to be true, because they did not die on the day they sinned; nor did they, as some maintain, become subject to death as a result of sin, for they were corruptible even when created and before sin occurred.

What actually happened was that they were clothed with skins, involving, we infer, the sacrifice of animals, who thus forfeited their lives to provide a covering, typical of forgiveness. Thus their personal guilt was typically atoned and their repentance and faith accepted, so that they lived their allotted span, were fruitful, multiplied and replenished the earth. But over and above their personal relationship, as the federal head of the human family their one act of disobedience, as the sin of the world, entailed all their offspring. No one but them was guilty, but for the merciful purpose of God to extend to all sinners the chance of salvation, their one act of disobedience is made representative of all the sins of all mankind and by it all are regarded as born in bondage to sin or a state of alienation from God. No one is held guilty for their sin and no one will ever be punished for it, since it has been atoned for by Jesus; the only sin which God now regards is the sin of rejecting the offer of salvation through Him, and this sin will be punished with death. The second death.

The fact that it is from legal alienation and not from physical degeneration that we need redemption is established in the symbolism of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden and exclusion from the Tree of Life. When in Eden, with access to all the trees, they were in harmony with God and therefore in a living condition; that they were expelled indicates a changed relationship - a cutting off, not a changed nature. No literal tree could have conferred immortality any more than a literal tree could have implanted a law of decay and a bias towards evil. The Tree of Life represents God, who alone can give life and by sin the human race has been separated from Him, so that we require *religion* - a binding again to Him. The other tree, which served the purpose of making sin manifest, was not only the tree of the knowledge of evil but of the knowledge of good and evil; for the one has no meaning without the other.

When Jesus Himself explained His mission He said:-

“For even the son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for all.”

If He knew that His death was, in A.D.Norris’s words, “The only means whereby he could destroy... the power of sin within himself” why did Jesus use the expression “ransom”? The original word is *lutron*, a price paid for the release of a prisoner or the redemption of a person in bondage. As we have seen, its meaning would be familiar to Jews because of the ordinance of the law which required that every soul should be the subject of a ransom payment of exactly half a shekel. “Every one... shall give an offering... the rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less, to make an atonement for your souls.” This decree was laid down to keep them in mind that they were individually alienated from God and stood in need of redemption, and the price to be paid was the same for every soul - a fixed ransom. The same fact was re-emphasized in the ordinance that every first-born in Israel was to be regarded as devoted; if it was not redeemed by the appropriate equivalent life, not a sum of money this time, but a life, it had to be put to death. “The firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb. If thou redeem him not thou shalt break his neck. All the first born of thy sons thou shalt redeem” (Exodus 34:20).

If now we apply the principles underlying these various provisions of the Law to the death of Christ it is clear to see how He made possible our salvation by the sacrifice of Himself. His was the blood shed for the remission of sin, because His blood was precious as no other man’s was. His life was the equivalent ransom price of the life lost in Eden, because His life alone had the necessary value - it was His own to sacrifice if He chose, because it came to Him direct from God and He did not forfeit it by sin. We were all in bondage - children of the bondwoman, whereas He was born in the Master’s house and was the heir. He was rich in His inheritance but for our sakes’ He became poor, when He made Himself of no reputation and took the status of a servant.

Coming at last to the prophets, they put the finishing touches to the proof which is already overwhelming. The 53rd Isaiah establishes with irresistible clarity that the Arm of the Lord brought salvation by voluntarily vicarious suffering, speaking of the One who was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, whose soul was made an offering for sin, and it leaves us aghast that its teaching finds no place in a Confession pretending to explain His death but which in fact renders the whole prophecy meaningless.

The only other prophet to which we need refer is Daniel, where we read that “After three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.” If there is one thing that will be clear to those who have read this Confession, it is that if Jesus’ sole escape from His own evil condition was through death, then His death was for Himself, for He was the first to benefit from it and His eternal existence - if it is true - depended on it. Yet Gabriel, who may be expected to know more about it than even a Ph.D., says exactly the reverse, it was not for Himself.

Here, finally, we put side by side the complete clause of the new Confession and, reduced as nearly as possible to the same space what we believe to be the true teaching of Scripture:

A.D.NORRIS	THE SCRIPTURES
I believe that Jesus Christ was crucified, dead and buried.	Jesus sacrificed His life so that man might have the hope of Eternal Life. All who derive life from Adam are separated from God and without hope because of sin.
I believe that He submitted willingly to death as the means of overcoming once for all the	Jesus’ life did not come from Adam but direct from God, and because He was not a sinner He had a

<p>desires which exist in human flesh and in doing so acknowledge the existence of those desires and revealed the only way in which they may be conquered. I believe that by dying, the Lord became finally free from any weakness which He inherited from man.</p>	<p>right to life which we do not have and could have claimed immortality and entered heaven alone. Instead He submitted to the death of the Cross because He chose voluntarily to bear the penalty of sin, to purchase us back to God, giving His life in place of the life lost in Eden.</p>
<p>I know that the same spirit is called for from me also. I must take up my cross and follow Him. He must be my guide in leading me to deny worldly lust, to deny myself, and to desire to die to an old life before I may be joined to Him in a new one.</p>	<p>I know that I am personally an undeserving sinner, but if I truly believe in His mercy and love in giving His only Son as the Saviour, God will accept my faith in lieu of righteousness.</p>
<p>I see baptism the proper burial for my former self as I seek to begin a new life in Christ.</p>	<p>In baptism I confess my faith by passing in symbol through the death which Jesus suffered for me literally.</p>

We now conclude by asking A.D.Norris one simple question based upon his Confession and it is this: If the example of Jesus does not succeed in enabling you to deny worldly lusts, to deny yourself - and you admit it cannot, how do you hope to be saved?

If you are a sinner still and will die a sinner, what is to happen to you? Do you not now see the value of the objective sacrifice which Jesus made for you and the hopelessness of your pitiable Confession? Do you not see that by dying for Adam and you in him, Jesus obtained for you a restoration to God's favour which you will never deserve or attain by your own way of life whatever the example before you?

The only thing which can ever commend any of us to God is our faith - sinners as we are - in the gift of His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.

Ernest Brady.
April 1964.