

Correspondence with A.D.Norris

Introduction

Having read some of the writings of A.D.Norris I decided to write to him to see if he had revised his understanding of the Sacrifice of Christ. I expressed my views to him and invited him to respond with his views, if possible at similar length.

The first article, "Understanding The Sacrifice Of Christ," expresses my understanding and the second article, "Christ Died For Our Sins" expressed the understanding of A.D.Norris.

This correspondence was published in the Nazarene Fellowship magazine with an open invitation to all who may wish, to write to him with their comments, whatever their views may be. These were all sent to A.D.Norris though he chose not to reply to anyone.

Russell Gregory

In this first letter I expressed my views as those of the Nazarene Fellowship

Understanding The Sacrifice of Christ

If we do not understand how and why the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion saves us how can we say we believe? We ought to devote time and prayer to the matter so we can be fully persuaded in our own minds independent of others, especially of those who would say these doctrines are too deep, or require long experience or training to understand them. This is not so, for the truth is straight forward and easy to follow, and once we grasp it clearly in our minds we can go on to plumb greater depths of Scriptural truths with clarity of thought and conviction.

Follow Scripture carefully and prayerfully; the path we take from Eden to Calvary has to be straight and true for we must understand what happened in Eden to understand what happened in Gethsemane regarding the sacrifice of Christ, then the message of the Cross gives great comfort to the heart and steadfastness to life.

To fulfil His purpose God is calling out a people for His Name, people who will strive to do what is right in His sight, even if necessary to the giving up of their lives, to bring honour and glory to Him. Such people are the children of God. These are "True worshippers" who "shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." - John 4:23.

As parents we love our children. We set them rules of acceptable behaviour and if a child makes a mistake we do what we can to make matters right again and encourage the child to do better in future. All is done out of love for the child to help him or her make right choices and develop good character. This is the pattern of God's dealings with His children. Adam was God's son by creation and he made a mistake; he made a wrong choice. Our story starts here and shows how God, his Father put matters right for him, and for us.

The Law of Sin and Death

Adam was created from the dust of the ground and was a living soul dependent on the natural processes common to all animals and therefore corruptible. The difference between man and the lower animals is that God endowed him with the intellectual powers of a reasoning mind and free will so when placed under law he could choose and so develop good character well pleasing to his Creator.

In Eden Adam was placed under law which required perfect obedience, whilst disobedience would incur the penalty of death. Forgiveness had no place in the law of sin and death in Eden and should Adam sin the debt of life owed to the law had to be paid. So when Adam transgressed he incurred judicial death as the penalty and was in dire straits and could do nothing to regain his freedom from the death penalty. Perfect obedience from that moment on would not have sufficed, for the requirements of the law would not have been met as his life was already forfeit. Even the giving of his life would not have been sufficient payment for he now had only an imperfect life to offer, and an imperfect life was not equal to the perfect life he had forfeited. Indeed being forfeited his life had no value.

The Scriptures teach that there was a change in Adam's relationship to his Creator when he disobeyed the law. This was a legal matter. His legal position changed, previously he was innocent now he was guilty; he had been free of condemnation, now he was under condemnation; he was no longer free and his life was in pledge to sin; no longer a Son of God but a bondservant of Sin, for when he transgressed he sold himself to another owner, he became the servant of Sin and had left the house wherein he was a Son of God and sold himself into slavery (John 8:34, Romans 6:16). Yet he did not suffer the penalty for his sin, that is to say, that the penalty of "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" was not carried out.

The First Sacrifice

God in His mercy and love provided a way in which the requirement of the law would be met and Adam redeemed from his death sentence.

In the first instance we learn that an animal was slain in Eden. Instead of Adam perishing an animal perished, and the death of the animal provided a covering for him, a covering he wore as a constant reminder that the animal had died in his stead. The slain animal was the first sacrifice and it was symbolic of the one great Sacrifice to follow. It was a type of the Lamb of God who was to come to take away the Sin of the world - "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" as foretold in Genesis 3:15, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head while the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel; the head wound to the serpent being destructive of its power was to free man from bondage to the law of sin and death which bars the way to eternal life. It is law that reigns and in it we see the loving-kindness, mercy and justice of God.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," His greatest possession, to be the sacrifice for the Sin of the world so we might be persuaded of His love "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). A sacrifice in which Jesus Christ voluntarily offered Himself, who said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). His Father asked of Him the willingness to give His own life to take away the Sin of the world and thereby deliver the human race from bondage to the law of sin and death. In doing this He showed great strength of character, determination and courage-

Jesus Christ The Antitype

Before Jesus Christ could offer Himself as the sacrifice to take away the Sin of the world it was needful He be "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He had to be tried under law, like Adam, and prove Himself to be perfect for had He failed He would have been in the same position as Adam after he sinned, and quite unable to save Himself or anyone else. Having served His years of probation Jesus Christ was rich with His own perfect character in His natural life and could have entered into eternal life without dying, but how then would the Scriptures have been fulfilled? In Jesus own words "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone" and that would have been His position, abiding alone, for all eternity but out of His love for us He chose to take Adam's place by dying the violent death due to Adam. It was a life for a life. It was an equivalent life to the one Adam had been given as Son of God at creation and which he had forfeited. The equivalent price which Jesus paid for Adam's redemption - "They that hated me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away" (Psalm 69:4). He restored life to Adam's race and with it the opportunity of eternal life.

When Jesus Christ said “I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10) He was referring to two distinct lives. The penalty incurred by Adam was inflicted death in the day he sinned which would have resulted in him losing his natural life as well as his opportunity of eternal life. Jesus came to restore both. He came that we might have life, our redeemed life here and now and that we might have it more abundantly in the future - which is, eternal life.

But how did the one life of Jesus Christ, given in place of Adam’s life save all? The Apostle Paul explains in his Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere:

The Federal Principle

The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 3:22, “But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” That is to say we are all included in the Sin of Adam so that the one sacrifice which redeemed Adam and thereby gave him the opportunity of eternal life by faith does the same for us.

The Federal Principle is seen in Romans chapter 5 where the Apostle Paul shows how through the one transgression of Adam all were constituted sinners. Not made sinful, but were sold to the power of “Sin” which he personifies elsewhere as a slave-owner; and through the righteousness of one, Jesus Christ, the faithful are constituted righteous. We see then the two Federal Heads - Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam is the Federal Head of all under the law of sin and death while Jesus Christ is the Federal Head of all under Grace:-

In Adam
(Romans 5)

In Christ
(Romans 5)

v.10 When we were enemies	we shall be saved by His life.
v.12 By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men in whom (margin) all have sinned.	
v.15 through the offence of one many be dead. Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.	...much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man,
v.16 Judgment was by one to condemnation unto justification.	but the free gift is of many offences
v.17 by one man’s offence death reigned grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.	...they which receive abundance of
v.18 by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, of life.	by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification
v.19 by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,	by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.
v.20 the law entered that the offence might abound.	but grace did much more abound-
v.21 sin hath reigned unto death, righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.	even so might grace reign through

Ransom

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you” (Acts 3:22). Even as Moses was the only Israelite not a slave and therefore free to negotiate with Pharaoh, so likewise Jesus was the only human being not inheriting Adam’s bondage to Sin and therefore free to give His life a Ransom for many.

No one of Adam’s line could effectually lay down his life as a ransom. It had to be a life free of the condemnation under which all in Adam lived and in order to meet this necessity a Ransom had to be paid by someone of the same flesh and blood as Adam yet with a life free from condemnation and this is the reason why Jesus was born the Son of God; He was given a new life direct from His Father, not through the line of Adam; and was related to the race being born of a woman.

In the law God gave to Moses regarding slavery we read that where it was impossible for a bondservant to buy his own freedom because of his poorness, the law gave the right for a near kinsman to pay the price of his redemption and so free the bondservant and his family from their servitude. The near-kinsman to Adam who was in bondage to Sin, was Jesus Christ who was free of any bondage. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9); rich with His own life whereas we are poor.

Jesus was in a strong position whereas we, being in bondage, are in a very weak position, and Jesus, being obedient all His natural life gave it as the exact equivalent price to redeem Adam and all in him.

A Man who was tempted in all points as we are and made as we are of the same flesh and blood Jesus Christ was touched with the feeling of our infirmities and learned obedience by the things which He suffered. We see Jesus Christ then of His own free will, determined to please His Father, accepting the task of redeeming mankind from annihilation, going voluntarily and courageously to His death on the Cross and giving up His natural life for the sake of and in the place of His brother Adam; a life for a life, the Just for the unjust, one person paying the debt owed by another, the innocent person paying the debt owed by the guilty sinner.

It was of course substitution, as is any purchase, and it was necessary for salvation for had not Christ died on the Cross we would not have been redeemed and would still be in our sins. It was a matter of a righteous man freely paying the debt of life owed by the guilty that the guilty might not perish.

Was it unjust for Jesus Christ to give His life and die for us in this way? It was not, because He voluntarily paid it and no one took His life from Him. He laid it down of His own free will for the joy that was set before Him and in bringing many sons to glory. The Cross speaks of Love while at the same time establishing the principles of justice.

Jesus Christ came into the world to give us our natural life and with it the opportunity of life more abundant, eternal life, which is the gift of God to all who love and honour the Son.

There was no commandment demanding Jesus Christ lay down His life which, had He failed would have made Him a sinner. He voluntarily laid down His life - “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.” (John 10:18). The very fact that He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from crucifixion had His courage failed proves this could not have been sin had He not died by crucifixion, for God would have saved His life by providing the angels.

Jesus Christ did not flee in the face of evil. He gave His back to the smiter. He hid not His face from shame and spitting, He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah shows beyond all cavil that Jesus Christ died in place of us. His life for ours.

Out of Adam and Into Christ

Jesus Christ suffered for us so that we can come out of Adam and into Christ by baptism into Him. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death...?” - Romans 6:3. We do not have to die for Sin except in symbol in the waters of baptism, from which we rise no longer in bondage to Sin, no longer under the condemnation of the law of sin and death but under the law of life by Grace through Jesus Christ.

In the foreknowledge of God He saw that Jesus Christ would take Adam’s place in death so that Adam need not die for his transgression, and thereby we, in due time. Have received our natural life from him, and indeed more, than this, for we also have received the opportunity of eternal life. And so now, if we choose to do His will and keep His commandments, we shall have that life more abundantly, for our eternal life is dependent upon our baptism into Him and upon doing His will.

“Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” - John 15:13,14. Jesus Christ asks perfection of us ~ “be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” - Matthew 5:48 - it is His command for us.

Having been redeemed by Jesus Christ and baptized into Him, should we fail to do whatsoever He commands us - fail in that perfection asked of us, we can receive forgiveness for our sins through Him. “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Psalm 130:3,4).

“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” - 2 Timothy 2:5.

Russell Gregory.

In response to the above letter, A.D.Norris, expressed his views as follows:

Christ Died For Our Sins

I am, so to speak, a card-carrying member of the Central Christadelphian Fellowship. I believe that what I now write is our common Christadelphian belief. But I do not pretend to myself that it is put in a conventional way. I have tried to see the meaning of the coming, the life and temptations, the sufferings and dying, and the resurrection and glory, of my Lord - all this in a way which does not encumber my thinking with an elaborate sacrificial vocabulary, or overlay my devotion with a heavy elaboration of types and antitypes, and constant looking over my shoulder to see whether this is the way it would have been put in, say, Leviticus; or even the Letter to the Hebrews.

I even think it may not be put in the way those Books would have put it, though I do not think that either Moses or Paul, or the Inspirer of them both, would have found anything unacceptable in it. I hope in God’s mercy that they would all, especially the last, say, “This is what the ages were leading to. This is Christ walking by our sides without the leading strings which led men towards Him in the days before He came. This is Christ standing in His own right, and on His own feet.” At least, I hope they would all say that this is what I was faithfully trying to present, and that I had not altogether failed in the attempt.

I believe that what the apostles were doing, in Hebrews and Galatians and elsewhere, is what I am seeking to reproduce now. But of course those holy men of God spoke with authority and divinely granted discernment, purged of the limitations which afflict all of us who now have no open vision. What I hope to do is show how we may profit from what they did, and the stages through which they passed, as so wonderfully when the Lord struck Paul blind from human prejudices, and opened his eyes again to perceive the fullness of His Grace.

Galatians and Hebrews both help us here to let the scales - if there are any – fall away from our eyes, so that we may behold something of what God is, through them and through the life of our Lord Himself, trying to teach us. So first let these two Books speak for me with a frankness which I should not have dared to use without their encouragement. Here are a passage or so from each:

Galatians:

“I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:19,20).

‘Now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. (Galatians 4:9,10).

“For this Hagar is mount Sinai, in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.” (Galatians 4:25,26).

Hebrews (in summary):

Christ and His work: better than angels (1:4) - crowned with glory and honour vastly excelling theirs (2:9)- worthy of more glory than Moses, as a Son over God’s house (5:3,6) - a High Priest with a higher calling, than Aaron and his successors, the only-begotten Son of God (5:4-6) - our Leader into the true, the heavenly Most Holy Place, where He sits at the right hand of His Father, day in and day out continually (6:19,20) - His tabernacle greater and more perfect (9:11) - If the blood of animals denoted ritual cleansing, how much more will the dying of Christ cleanse the spirit? (9:13,14) - The holy place of the tabernacle was symbolic only, but [the holy place into which the risen Christ entered is real, being heaven itself (9:24) - The sacrifices of the old covenant were only symbols, ineffective in themselves and requiring endless repetition - but the offering of the Lord Jesus was once and for all, and need not and cannot be repeated (9:25-28).

“There is verily an annulment of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God “(7:18,19), “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (8:6-8,13).

“It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (10:4,11,12).

“Ye are not come to the mount [that might be touched, and that burned with fire, not unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest... But ye are come unto mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (12:2,22).

What happened to the human race?

Whether the term “very good” refers to the creation which culminated in Adam, and sums up the ‘perfection’ of all that God made in the beginning (Genesis 1:31), or whether it looks forward to what was to be the eventual outcome when the Lord Jesus should have performed His atoning work, the fact is that the flawlessness of the world of Genesis 1:31- 2:25 was at best fragile and vulnerable. The closing words of

Genesis 2 are an omen of bad things to come: “They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” (Genesis 2:26).

All the things that our fertile imagination can conjure up from that statement were foreign to the thinking of the unfallen first couple. If you had been able to appear to them and say, “Do you know you have no clothes on?” they might have replied, “Clothes, what are clothes?” and be surprised that to our compromised minds that sounded funny. But so fundamental was that ultimate picture of a lustless society that Genesis uses it as the springboard to mark the change which took place once the forbidden fruit had been tasted.

“They heard the voice of the Lord God... and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called to Adam, and said to him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” (Genesis 3:8-11).

Before the Fall, nakedness was a fact but it was not remarkable. There was nothing to make it so. But after the Fall nakedness was the response of a bad conscience towards God. It epitomized all that might now go wrong in practice, once the protection of innocence had been breached.

Trace the precipitous decline of the human race from that point on;

1. The morbid awareness of nakedness provoked shame in the presence of the Creator (3:10).
2. The discovery of the nakedness called for an explanation which was either excuse-making, or a downright rebellious transfer of responsibility from the sinner to the Sinless One; “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (3:12).
3. The fallen couple became parents of children, one of whom offered a rebellious sacrifice, and when it was rejected, committed the first murder; “To Cain and to his offering God had not respect. Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. Cain talked with Abel his brother, and when they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him, “(4:5,8).
4. Among the descendants of Cain was found the first recorded bigamist, who seems to have slain a man so as to possess himself of his wife; “Lamech took two wives. Lamech said unto his wives. Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for injuring me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold” (4:19,24, modified as in NIV). God might offer some protection to Cain, but Lamech boasted that he needed no such guarding: anyone who attacked him would fare far worse than Cain!
5. In the other fruitful line, that of Seth, the life of an exceptionally righteous man was so threatened by sinners that only God’s hiding him could save him from their evil purposes; “Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him” (5:22,24). If we want to know why he was so imperilled, then Jude tells us, “Enoch prophesied of these, saying. Behold, the Lord cometh to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14,15).
6. Enoch prophesied in the spirit of his great-grandson Noah, whose life was so contrasted with that of his contemporaries that he is described as “perfect” (6:8,9).
7. From the isolated examples of notorious sinners summarized above, we pass to a picture of a world which had become hopelessly contaminated with well-nigh universal corruption, “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both

man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them” (6:5,7).

8. But this is far from being the whole story. From innocence yielding to temptation, through to hiding from God, to rebellious utterance, wilful wrong offering and consequent murder, to violence in the service of profligacy, we have gone on to corruption and rejection of the message of God which is wholesale and nearly universal. The Deluge may have been the only way of bringing matters under control, but it was only a palliative. Even if there were to be another Flood it could only cut out a canker from an infested body.

“The Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done (8:21).

At the time there was no one alive younger than 100. That statement about the heart of man is a generic picture of what the human heart is like. When the next generation arose it would be inwardly just like the one which had been eliminated. It could no more be cured by drowning than by the Pharisees’ surgical washing of the hands:

“There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, evil thoughts proceed; adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:15-23).

All this means that we have traced a spread of actual evil through the human race which began with the first yielding to temptation by the original human pair; which burgeoned in the period between that Fall and the Flood; which was only temporarily stayed by that Deluge; and which left on the scene a man who, though ‘perfect’ as compared with his contemporaries, was the father of sons, one of whom was apparently guilty of exploiting Noah’s inebriation in lascivious pleasure at his exposure, so that Ham (or was it Canaan?) came under a curse because of his lustful pleasure in his father’s (or grandfather’s?) exposure;

“He said. Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren” (9:25).

This event would seem to be long enough after the Deluge itself for a new generation to have come into being, and to have vindicated what God said concerning the heart of man being evil from his youth up (8:21).

It is not necessary to detail the endless sequences of lapse into gross communal sin which afflicted mankind after the Flood. But we have only to mention the conspiracy of Babel (11: 1-9); the profligacy of Sodom (13:13, 18:1 - 19:31); even the deceitfulnesses of Abraham’s kin - Jacob, Laban, Reuben, and the like; to fill in our thinking, as it were, until we come to the people of God themselves. Their persistent and repeated waywardness in the Wilderness on the way to Canaan (Exodus 16 and 17; Numbers 20,25 and more); the chaotic declensions in the days of the Judges; and the terminal conditions which arose in the days of the Kings, all bear witness to the deep-rooted corruption of their hearts;

“Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. The LORD God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chronicles 36:14-16).

This is not to say that Israel was peculiar in its corruptions; rather, that it was particularly conspicuous and culpable because it continued to indulge those corruptions in spite of the favours and the enlightenment and the rebukes which God, through Moses and the prophets, caused to come upon it. Israel illustrates the worst in our human dispositions, that, no matter what steps are taken to correct them, continue to assert themselves regardless. Israel witnessed what is a pervasive truth concerning mankind as a whole;

“Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is... The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:5-9).

In which Jeremiah anticipates the judgment passed by the Lord Jesus Himself, already quoted here. And, of course, the judgment of the Lord Jesus is confirmed in the no-less far-reaching picture painted by Paul:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you beforehand, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

With this I leave the question posed at the beginning of this section, “What happened to the human race?” in the knowledge that massive further evidence is available to leave our desperate plight in no doubt. Without God to help there can be no deliverance from sin, let alone from the death to which it gives rise.

“He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:18-21).

All I have so far written is material which convinces me that the Scriptures are much more deeply involved in deliverance from sin than they are in the quite secondary deliverance from death, for which we all long. The latter cannot be had without the former, and it is on the former that the picture of the Saviour in the Gospels is concentrated. And it is at this point that Paul’s picture of the means of human redemption comes to the fore and demands elucidation;

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin(,) in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 7:24-8:8).

What the law failed to do was to provide a basis of righteousness for sinners. It failed in this because the nature of ‘flesh’ stood in its way. And the obstruction offered by flesh was that it would not willingly conform to the standards the Law had laid down:

I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me, but to perform that which is good I find not... I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:16-24).

Paul is speaking of the inmost need of a sin-bound body, which he is unable in himself to satisfy. He did not make himself that way, it was not his fault that he was so born; but faced with the choice of pretending to be strong and righteous enough to do in his own power what the righteousness of God required, and papering over the cracks of his obvious failure, he had learned the hard way that this is not what God requires, and not what God will be satisfied with. There was another way, which he would see clearly when,

faced with the self-emptying righteousness of his Lord, he ceased to kick against the goad, and resolved to follow the Lord Jesus rather than withstand Him.

The Lord Jesus had already taught that lesson to Peter, though it would be some time before Peter would be ready to apply it and practise it; here are the stages through which Peter must go to learn the lesson. The argument is paraphrased:

1. "Peter, who do you think I am?" (Matthew 16:15).
2. "Lord, you are the anointed King, the Son of the Living God!" (16:16).
3. "Peter, on the rock of that declaration I will found my Congregation, which even the powers of death will not be able to hold in bondage" (16:18,19).
4. "...but before that day can come I must be crucified, dead, and buried, for only from this can the Resurrection to Life emerge" (16:21).
5. "No Lord, you must never allow anything like that to happen to you!" (16:23).
6. "It is the only way. Peter, for me and you and all of us, Stop standing in front of me and seeking to hinder me, and get behind me, where you belong, and follow me. You must accept the Cross as your own proper way to salvation, so take up a cross every one of you, and come with me to the place where men are crucified!" (16:23-26).

It was not Peter's fault that he was born the way he was, but it would have been his grievous and fatal fault if he had declined to confess and deplore the nature he bore. Had he aggressively sought to block the Lord's path to Golgotha, and continued to confront his Lord's call to self-denial and cross-bearing with a continued "This shall not be unto Thee!" He could have found no salvation. But when he ceased to be Satan and fell in line behind his Lord, then salvation was his for the faithful continuance in asking.

There is no mistaking the Lord's metaphor. When His enemies condemned Him to crucifixion, most of the Twelve in fact forsook Him and fled, and the one who remained held on to his fragile faith only while there remained hope that the Lord would still use His power to walk free from His enemies. But when Peter saw that this was not to be, his as yet false conception that Messiah must not yield to His enemies broke his heart, and, three times repudiating any connection with his Master, he saw the Lord's saddened eyes upon him, and "went out and wept bitterly."

There is not that uncomplicated one-to-one relationship between baptism and conversion which one might like to think. Doubtless all the Apostles had been baptized; John, son of Zebedee and Andrew at least by John the Baptist.¹ The earliest apostles, in their earliest days, harboured mistaken notions opposing the need for the Lord Jesus' death. There were stages in their conversion, and in Peter's case at least a vital stage was still lacking in him when the Lord said to him at the Last Supper, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you (all) that he may sift you (all) as wheat; but I have prayed for thee (in particular); and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-34). What began with his sobbing repentance (22:62) must have been given substance by the appearance of the risen Lord, and specially so, for all of them save Judas Iscariot, by the instruction they received before the Ascension (Acts 1:1-11). So Peter's understanding of self-denial and taking up the cross had, during the conversation in Caesarea, a long way to go. Doubtless the same was true of the others too.

In fact the best understanding of the death of Jesus before He actually died is that displayed by the malefactor on the Cross by His side:

"Dost thou not fear God - (this to his impenitent fellow) - seeing thou art in the same condemnation? We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom! And Jesus said to him, Verily I say to thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise"² (Luke 23:40-43).

The true understanding of sin to which this repentant sinner came as he compared his own proper punishment side by side with the affliction of a Saviour Who had ‘done nothing amiss’, should prepare us all for our own participation in the benefits of the crucifixion of our Lord. Consider this compelling catena of passages:

1. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24 as above. See also 10:38, Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 14:27).
2. “If we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified (together) with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that hath died is justified from sin.” (Romans 6:5-7).
3. “We preach Christ crucified... unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23,24).
4. “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).
5. “I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God, I have been crucified (together)³ with Christ, yet I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:19,20).
6. “O foolish Galatians, who bath bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified?” (Galatians 3:1).
7. “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these... They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:19-24).
8. “Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).
9. “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of man... becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him.” (Philippians 2:5-11).
10. “Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered... having been made perfect He became to all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:8,9).

The Cross, by whatever name we choose to designate it, is at the very centre of our understanding of the Atonement. Historically, the crucifixion is something which was done to our Lord by sinners, but which He accepted of His own free will:

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep... I lay down my life for the sheep... Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:11,15, 17, 8).

And whatever the Lord and Paul said about Jesus’ death, represented as a ransom (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, 1 Timothy 2:6), neither of them (in these passages at least) pauses to develop the substitutionary metaphor, nor is that the purpose of the passages. In the two former the Lord is concerned with renouncing any claims to self-importance: He did not come to be afforded honours, nor to encourage His disciples to do so, but at His own high cost to give all in the services of others. In the last passage God’s concern for the salvation of men is shown to be so great that everyone who is willing is comprehended within the grace shown by the Lord in dying for them. And in the passage concerning the Good Shepherd the Lord showed

that He was not compelled to yield to the evil designs of men, but did so voluntarily, and for this reason earned His Father's good pleasure.

We must take up in connection with our Lord what we have already affirmed of Paul and Peter. Neither of these two was responsible for the nature he bore; their heredity from Adam and Eve provided this. But each was responsible for what he would do when called to repent. And Peter was told, and Paul came to recognize, that the right thing to do with one's fleshly nature is to crucify it: "to deny oneself and take up one's cross and follow the Lord." So for the Lord Himself; the nature He bore was inborn in Him, and neither blame nor guilt attached to Him on that account. But the right thing to do, for the One so innocently afflicted with "the likeness of flesh of sin" was to see to it that "flesh of sin" was humbled and brought to nought.

So the Lord Jesus accepted the office of becoming an offering for sin, and in His own flesh condemned the sin to which He had never yielded. This was the only way; temptation must be resisted whenever it came upon Him, but this was not enough. He must win every battle, but there was only one way to win the war, and that was to accept the divine wish, and at the appointed time "die for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). What was accomplished by that removed all obstacles to the heavenly exaltation of the Lord, as I have shown from Philippians 2:5-10 and Hebrews 5:5-10. Having emptied Himself, and seated that process by allowing His body to be done to death on the Cross, the Lord had removed from His mortal body all that could have resisted the will of God, and made possible His exaltation. God knew well that, as Paul put it, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Any glory which men might pay to the Lord thenceforth would be ascribed by the glorified Son as truly belonging to the God, His Father, who had sent Him. The Lord had pin-pointed the source from which men's sins sprang, and had removed it. By death He had "brought to nought him that hath the power of death, that is the devil," and had fulfilled in reality what Moses had done for Israel in type, when they had been incurably smitten by the serpents in the wilderness;

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14,15).

"The Lord said to Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one that is bitten, when he looketh on it shall live. Moses (did so) and if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of bronze, he lived" (Numbers 21:8,9).

On the literal scale, Israel had sinned mortally, and nothing they could do could save their lives. Their only hope lay in a simple appeal to God's mercy, and when this was granted it took the form of exhibiting a model of the serpents which afflicted them, exposed to 'execution' on the pole. If they looked at this in faith they were saying in effect, "What is beyond our power to defeat, God has shown that He can conquer. We put our trust in Him!" And in so doing they were healed for their faith's sake. The Lord Jesus then comes on the scene, and what He says is tantamount to this:--

You are mortally stricken because of your sins -	Just as Israel was in the wilderness Just as theirs was.
You are incapable of delivering yourselves. Your fate can be averted by your faith in the conquest of sin by the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross,	Just as they were by gazing at the transfixed serpent.
But the conquest by Jesus was a reality,	whereas that shown by Moses was a prophetic symbol only.

In fact-

“He made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We can sum up the triumph of Jesus very quickly. Though afflicted with the disposition towards sin which He shared with us all, He resisted temptation whenever it assailed Him. But each victory won a battle only, and the war continued for so long as the fleshly nature remained alive. To lay down His life while still sinless was the Lord Jesus’ only way to final and unchallengeable victory, a victory which was achieved when He “became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” The subsequent high exaltation of the Lord Jesus, now for ever freed from the impulses which characterize out flesh, qualifies Him in every regard to be Priest for His own people, conqueror of the nations when He returns, and purging the world of all unrighteousness and its consequences before He presents the entirely perfected work to His Father. Only in this way was His perfection to be attained, as all four uses of the word ‘to perfect’ about Him in the New Testament convincingly show:

“Behold I cast out demons, and I do cures to-day and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected” (Luke 13:22).

“It became (God), in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

“Though he was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect. He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him” (Hebrews 5:8,9).

“The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity, but the word of the oath, which was since the Saw, maketh the Son who is consecrated (= perfected) for evermore” (Hebrews 7:28).

So what do we do in our helpless thralldom to sin?

1. We admit our own helplessness to overcome in our own strength.
2. We accept the message of surrender given by the Lord in His embracing of the Cross, seeing in this His own completed victory over sin.
3. We associate ourselves with His crucifixion, set out in terms already referred to:

- “Then said Jesus, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

- (in association with our baptism) “our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 6:5-7).

“The works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I tell you before(hand), as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:19-24).

- “I have been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Not, we should add, with His crucifixion only, but also with that prelude to the crucifixion provided by the circumcision carried out on the infant Christ as prescribed by the Law of Moses, itself a symbol of the renunciation of the flesh;

- “in Him ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11,12).

- “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” (Philippians 2:2-4).

4. Thus we go in symbol through the total yielding to God which the Son of God accomplished in fact.

5. Though in practice we all fail to fulfil the requirements of the course on which we have entered, the Lord, now perfected and our Priest at the right hand of God, stands ready to respond to faithful prayers addressed to His Father in His Name. Indeed, this is set out as the culmination of the work of Atonement in not a few passages of Scripture, with which we shall close this exposition:

“Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage... wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:14-18).

“Seeing that we have a great high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16),

“All things work together for good to those who love God, the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified... He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.” (Romans 8:28-34).

So this presentation of the doctrine of the atonement is that, starting with our human infirmity which arose through the offence of our first parents, and with the firm intention of God that His creation should attain the ends for which it was designed, we go on through the universal failure of all save One, and the continual reminders of the exceeding sinfulness of sin to the ultimate victory of Him “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” His victory over sin proceeded through numerous battles against manifold temptations to the ultimate and absolute triumph He won, by completing His total surrender to His Father by yielding His body to death. In this He became our example, leading us to our acceptance of the lesson of His work in our baptisms, so that the most compelling picture of what we do in becoming His disciples is that we follow Him to the Cross, bearing our own crosses in symbolic slaying and burial of our flesh “with its affections and lusts.” But He was more than our example; He was and is also our Leader and our Helper. His own future is secure in that, free from all human infirmity, He is now “made perfect;” and such a future He has provided for His faithful servants, who are taught:

“I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the

righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead; not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:8-14). 4

Alfred Norris 9th February 1998

ENDNOTES

1. We do not know that there was a general requirement to baptize the Baptist’s disciples when they came to Christ, for the example of Acts 19:1-7 is an isolated one, concerning very imperfectly instructed (however sincere) followers of the Lord Jesus who clearly recognized the defects in their Christian education and desired to set matters right. There was a chain of manifestations marking the progress of the gospel to various categories of disciples: Jews at Pentecost (Acts 1), Samaritans after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8): -

Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10-11); and now this small company in Ephesus. But it seems that watersheds like these were accompanied by miraculous manifestations of the Spirit which by no means represented the ordinary course of events. Even at Pentecost it is not reported that the 3000 converts did receive any miraculous visitation.

2. I adopt the ‘misplaced comma’ explanation here, because it eliminates the problem that Jesus was not in ‘paradise’ (whatever that may prove to mean) on that day, because it has the malefactor well-informed on the matter of the Lord’s future kingdom, and because it allows of a wonderfully sympathetic reply from the Lord; Remember you, and let you die in doubt? I will tell you to-day, and let you die in peace. You will be with me when paradise is established on the earth!”

3. ‘Crucified together’ is used to render the Greek verb *sustauroO*, co-crucify. The two passages quoted about the co-crucifixion of the believer with his Lord can be compared with the three others where the word is used about the malefactors literally crucified by the side of the Lord (Matthew 27:54, Mark 15:32, John 19:32).

4. Quotations broadly follow those of the Authorized King James Version. I have modernized a few words, and occasionally used the English Revised Version when it seemed to make a meaning clearer.

A.D.N.

We now publish four letters in response to the letter from A.D.Norris

The first of these letters is from Phil Parry: -

Let me first emphasize that the Apostle Paul declares, “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,” Isaiah 53; and not according to any card-carrying member of the Central Christadelphian Fellowship which denotes adherence to a man-made creed as introduced to certain ones in the year 1873 to prevent them accepting the enlightened scriptural teaching of Edward Turney and forcing them to produce his authorized cards similar to a Trade Union closed shop. This man was Robert Roberts, and it is plain to me that we are still being introduced to the same old doctrines by A.D.Norris which pervaded in 1873 when challenged as false by E.Turney, and others in agreement with his Lecture “The Sacrifice of Christ.”

However, we thank A.D.Norris for replying to our request to produce what he believes as a Christadelphian on the basis of Holy Scripture, but sad to say, his quoting of the Scriptures do not necessarily produce a true explanation of their meaning by reason of his being committed to the B.A.S.F., the Robertite doctrine of the Christadelphian Central Fellowship which denotes division, closed-shop and card-carrying. This should explain most of the first page of his treatise but I have still to deal with the title he has chosen for it, "Christ Died For Our Sins."

Robert Roberts stated, "It was our personal sins that were a barrier to our acceptance with God." This is not true, though it can be true once we are enlightened and have acknowledged our alienation from God through being born in Adamic Bondage under the Law of Sin and Death which passed legally (not physically) on all men, thus making all men sinners by constitution, and not by personal sin, not being under Divine Law in the case of us Gentiles yet as Paul teaches, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" - "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." A.D.Norris was not a personal sinner when Christ died on Calvary, neither was Robert Roberts, it was Adam's sin (singular) the Sin of the world which was the barrier to God's acceptance. Adam's sin left him without strength and under sentence of judicial death by slaying but typically taken away by the slaying of a lamb for a sin-covering. This legal sentence passed upon all men and described by John the Baptist as the Sin of the world because the whole world was federally involved in Adam's loins, without strength being by alienation without God, not standing before Him in their own right. John pointing the two men toward Jesus said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the Sin of the world." John did not say "sins" but "sin" (singular). We put off the old man and put on the new. See Ephesians 2:1 to 22 and 4:20 to 24, - "And you bath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins... But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)-.. If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off... the old man, which is corrupt (in mind)... and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." A Spiritual change^ not a physical-

Under HEBREWS (in summary) - bottom of page 6, in quoting (Hebrews 9:13,14) I am puzzled as to what is meant by his interpolation of verse 14 to read "How much more will the dying of the Lord cleanse the Spirit?" I would not have thought Spirit needs cleansing. The writer of Hebrews speaks of a "conscience-cleansing" from dead works to serve the living God. This is what I have been drawing attention to, that without the death of Christ to ratify Adam's typical covering, and all in his loins, plus the sin-offerings for transgressions under the dispensation before Christ's death, all works would be considered "dead" but in Christ was a new and living way to serve the living God through faith.

Page 7. There is not much to disagree with in the first six paragraphs, but what does Alfred mean by the breaching of the protection of innocence? It was Divine Law which had been breached, Adam's obedience to it was the protection of his innocence, he need not have been disobedient.

Now, says Alfred, "Trace the precipitous decline of the human race from that point on." Let us do so and what do we find? Two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain chose not to be corrected and put on the right way to acceptance with God, but Abel chose rightly, so where is this precipitous decline and your apparent omission of righteous Abel and his offering? Is it not apparent that the reason is to pursue your Robertite doctrine of Clause V of the B.A.S.F.?

1. "The morbid awareness of nakedness provoked shame in the presence of the Creator"? I do not agree. They were literally naked before their Creator at Creation and were not ashamed. It was guilt, transgression of law which portrayed them before God as having no covering for their sin and therefore naked and without strength. I would say that in partaking of the forbidden fruit they activated a Divine appointed sensor which would have made them aware of a physical nakedness which was in contrast with the appearance of the Lord God and remind them also of their sin. In any case there was a change of relationship to God but nowhere in Scripture does it say a change of physical nature and inclination to sin, with natural decay and death as the penalty incurred.

2. This is a bit strange, “A downright rebellious transfer of the responsibility from the sinner to the Sinless One: The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat.”

I was of the opinion from the reading, that Eve was first in the transgression, how then can Alfred say she was the sinner and that Adam was the sinless one, when Adam knew where she had obtained the fruit? Unless Alfred is referring to God as the Sinless One, and if this be the case then he would appear to have the conception that the Creator was once under Law Himself, which I regard as unacceptable.

As he progresses towards the next page Alfred is heading for the old false theories of Clause V - “A sentence which defiled and became a physical law of their nature and was transmitted to all their posterity.” A sentence which is falsely declared to have passed upon Adam and Eve by the Creator as a penalty for their sin. If sin was displeasing to the Creator it should surprise any intelligent person why the Creator should make any physical change to a nature already subject to decay and death by creation and then add to it a greater inclination to commit what He was already displeased with. If the Creator had done this it is more incredible how Seth remained a faithful man, also Enoch and Noah, men worthy to be written among the cloud of witnesses mentioned in Hebrews. Yet I find that Alfred needs men like this in his effort to bring greater discredit upon those who by their own responsible misdeeds perished in the flood. He then quotes God repenting He had made man because he saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Can we wonder at this if Clause V were ever true? Alfred and his members want us to believe this is true of all men and only certain passages are quoted out of context about the heart, and the words of Scripture which point to the good hearts of men and women are ignored. If the statement about the heart is a generic picture of what the human heart is like why not accept that this applies only to evil thoughts?

8. (Page 8). This is a continuation of the false theory that from Eden man has become more degenerate over the years as a result of Adam’s sin, yet we find that many people have by their faith and conduct proved such a theory to be false. I have already mentioned Hebrews 11, the cloud of witnesses. Yes, they were persecuted by men of corrupt minds whose hearts were evil, yet Jesus was a man. Was His heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? You say, “Even if there were to be another flood it could only cut out a canker from an infested body.” If the flood brought death, where the need to cut out anything from an infested body? Is this a reference to your theory that the premature death of Jesus was to end any temptation to sin from that point, and would amount to the “Betterment of his body” as you put, it elsewhere? Also you say “It could no more be cured by drowning by a second Flood, than by the Pharisees surgical washing of hands.” Could not be cured? It could be prevented. Jesus proved it by sinless conduct- You infer then that drowning by water-baptism (Symbolic death) cannot cure that which is infested with sin or a heart of deceit and wickedness, - That the old man of your theory is not crucified with Christ’s death, but that the same old man of “sin-infested-flesh” rises to the surface after immersion.

Why then do you preach baptism into death and rising to newness of life and freedom from sin if you believe as a Card-carrying Christadelphian that you still have sin as an element in your flesh?

The Roman believers had believed from the heart that form of doctrine Paul had delivered to them, so then their hearts must have been good, not deceitful and desperately wicked. Jesus said, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.” You ignore this in order to focus on the works of the flesh which are not in the flesh and blood but the result of works contrary to Divine Law, a list of which you have quoted from Galatians 5:19-21. You say, “Israel illustrates the worst in our human dispositions... Israel witnessed what is a pervasive truth concerning mankind as a whole.” What are you implying here? Is it your doctrine of sin-in-the-flesh as a defiling physical law of man’s nature as a Divine sentence on Adam and posterity? or should it not be plain, that it is the result of disrespect for God’s Law?

Alfred continues after quoting from Jeremiah 17:5-9, where we should be careful not to quote verse 9 out of the context of the previous verses and of verse 10 which his own members past and present have tended to do.

He talks of Jeremiah anticipating the judgment passed by the Lord Jesus Himself as quoted here, and this judgement of the Lord Jesus confirmed in the no less far-reaching picture painted by Paul, - Galatians

5:19-21. Alfred should realize that the works of the flesh are not elements of fixation in the physical flesh but are the results of violation of the Law, for without Law sin is dead. Thus Paul could give a list of the things done in violation of the Law which could, and can be, avoided. (See 1 Timothy 1:7 to 14).

How can one who believes the physical flesh to be sinfully inclined, judge those children of Israel with whom God was displeased for the violation of His commandments? A reading of Romans chapter 2 would be of benefit to anyone here. And if the term “flesh” is used indiscriminately as some do, to describe opposition to God’s Will by a compulsive inclination or fixation in the physical flesh, - how will they explain the remnant of Israel turning from their waywardness through God giving them a heart of flesh - a heart of flesh that Christadelphians have continually quoted as “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?” out of context from Jeremiah 17:9, without any thought for verses 5 to 8 and verse 10. See Ezekiel 11:19 to 21, regarding the heart of flesh.

But both Jesus and Paul describe a correct balance in their judgment, this being the works of the fleshly mind unregenerate by the Spirit Word, and the mind of the Spirit with works led thereby, being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God.

Alfred now poses the question, “What happened to the human race?” (middle of page 9), in the knowledge that “massive further evidence is available to leave our desperate plight in no doubt. Without God to help there can be no deliverance from sin, let alone from the death to which it gives rise.”

It is plain to the Nazarene Fellowship that in this last paragraph of page 9 Alfred is implying that the death he refers to here is the common death to which all creation is subject from the beginning of the creation which he says we all long to be delivered from. Of course the latter will be true to those alive at the coming of Christ who have legally and morally passed from the death which came by Adam’s sin and this is the death we are able to avoid through the sacrifice of Jesus. As Alfred has unwittingly agreed with us, deliverance from the death by sin cannot be had without deliverance from sin, but where we emphasize Paul’s teaching and that of Jesus, he is alluding to the death common to all creation whereas only the human race is involved through Law.

It is the dominion of sin, the legal position of slavery personified as under a Bond- master, that we can be freed from now through faith in God and His Son. We acknowledge this help from God in Adam’s case or we would not be here to contend or defend that fact.

Help was therefore at hand for Paul and others from the Sin and the Death, without the need of a physical death and change to incorruptibility (which was assured him in any case) at the coming of Christ (Romans 8:1,2 and 2 Timothy 4:7,8).

In Romans 5; 12, Paul is defining a different death to that common to all, otherwise he could not say what is written in Romans 8:1,2. Why not admit it?

At the top of page 10 you quote from Romans chapter 7 where Paul is saying he had been delivered from the body belonging to Sin or under that dominion, and instead of serving under that Law with the mind of the flesh, he was serving God with the mind of the Spirit. For as he says, “The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.”

But is it not a fact Alfred, that up to this present time those who have possessed the mind of the Spirit have died naturally and physically, and resurrection does not remove this fact of experience?

Jesus’ death was not a substitute for Adam’s natural death or for ours, if this were so we would not die, because that appointment would have been nullified by a change to spirit-nature. Robert Roberts was faced with this dilemma when writing “The Visible Hand of God” and under the subject of Enoch, where he had to admit to Christ’s death being a substitute for Enoch and also those faithful believers alive and remaining unto the coming of the Lord to raise the dead asleep in Him and at the same time change to Spirit-nature those of like faith. He asks, “How did Enoch escape and also those alive at the coming of the Lord?” referring of course to natural death as the penalty for sin which it could not be, he was forced to admit such a penalty

could not be in force and that Enoch and those alive and remaining had identified themselves and associated with the death of Christ as a substitute for the death-by-sin, in Enoch's case his association with the typical sacrificial animal and shedding of its blood, and the new covenant believers, by symbolic death with Christ in the waters of Baptism, having passed from under the sentence of judicial death to the sentence of the Spirit of Life in Christ.

This is taught by Dr. Thomas in Eureka yet he failed to see that natural death could not be the penalty for Adam's sin, and that the natural death of Christ (a possibility) would not fulfil the Divine appointment and Atonement required, namely, that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins and no reconciliation. God provided this in the provision and offering up of His sin-free Son whom He knew in His foreknowledge would willingly lay down His life in the blood in the place of Adam and all in him on the Federal principle, the equivalent life of the life forfeited in Eden by sin. Adam was a created Son of God free from sin. Jesus from the same nature was a begotten Son of God free from sin. Adam failed the test of faith, Jesus did not, but He went further still in that God never desired nor demanded the death of a sinless man, but to redeem Adam and all in his loins, Jesus willingly paid the price without losing His right as Heir of God and life Eternal.

It is noteworthy on page 10 how the crucifixion of Christ is mentioned but the main reason and meaning for His death ignored, but before I comment on this evasion I must refer to what Alfred says about the law of Moses.

He says, "What the law failed to do was to provide a basis of righteousness for sinners. It failed in this because the nature of flesh stood in its way. And the obstruction offered by flesh was that it would not willingly conform to the standards the Law had laid down."

This does not harmonize at all with the Scriptures. Alfred is saying the Law was too strong to be kept. Paul says that the Law was weak. He does not say the flesh was unable to keep it, but what the Law could not do, because for some reason it was weak through the flesh. Paul says, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just and good. For we know that the law is spiritual; but (as a man unconverted) I am carnal sold under sin. For I know that in me, that is in my flesh (unconverted to Christ) dwelleth no good thing." This is Paul speaking of his past, not the present.

Did he not say that touching the righteousness which was in the law blameless? Then surely there was in the law the provision for a basis of righteousness? And did not Jesus say to His disciples, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20)? Paul was a strict Pharisee having a zeal for the works and rituals in which that straitest sect boasted, as fleshly descendants of Abraham, but failed to see that they were still under sin - the Sin of the World which had not been taken away as the obstacle to The Way of Life. This Paul learned later and declared, "For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Romans 3:9 and Galatians 3:21 to 29).

What does it say of the parents of John the Baptist in Luke 1:6, "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless." Would that of itself have given them a right to eternal life? No, says Paul, "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." It is plain that under the law those who acknowledge their sin by repentance and brought the appointed offering in faith received the atonement and forgiveness by reason of acknowledgement that the Edenic Legal sentence of death was in force as long as the Law of Moses remained (Romans 5:20 and Romans 6:1-8).

The Nazarene Fellowship for many years have explained all this in their literature which has been suppressed, so why should I enlarge upon it now? Some have read it to their own advantage and credit but there is the element in Isaiah 6:1-10 and 13 in reference to Romans 11:5, to whom Paul also makes reference and with whose words I associate our work of preaching. (2 Corinthians 4:1-7).

In Isaiah 6:1 to 5 we have a vision of Jesus in glory which Isaiah saw in the year king Uzziah died. The authority to speak the truth was given to representatives of those who had been purged from iniquity and sin.

Isaiah was a type of such, and he “heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me,” Did the Lord God say, “I cannot send you because your body is cankered with sin”? No, this was a legal position which had been taken away and purged without any change of nature.

“And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed.”

“Then said I, Lord, how long? Until... the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth... so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

Confirmation of this is seen in Romans 11:2 to 8, “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” Even so now at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it (the Holy seed) and the rest were blinded, verse 8, according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber.

Concerning the words of Jesus to Peter listed from 1 to 6, I cannot accept how Alfred has presented much of it, for I perceive the same undercurrent of his beliefs which seem not to have changed for the better in giving the impression of devotion and good conduct toward God yet maintaining that Jesus must die on account of His human nature.

No. 3 is a misquotation of the words of Jesus. It is the gates of Hell that will not prevail against His congregation. The powers of death are already taken away, they are no longer under its power when they die naturally, they have passed from death to life in Christ. Nothing can prevent their resurrection to life Eternal.

No. 4 Of Jesus, Alfred says, “But before that day can come I must be crucified, dead and buried, for only from this can the Resurrection to Life emerge.” It is obvious that there can be no resurrection unless a person is physically dead, but who specifically would Christ’s resurrection to Life be for? Jesus need not have suffered an inflicted death on his own account. Those alive in Him at His coming will not do so by infliction nor natural means because Jesus has done it for them - not for Himself. But at No. 6 Alfred refutes this fact in his rebuke of Peter’s words which were the result of his respect and praise of his Master and not that it was right that Jesus should be crucified by wicked men.

I therefore denounce Alfred’s words, as dishonouring to Jesus, and not necessarily applicable to all who follow the example of Jesus. Our Lord did not say, “It is the only way, Peter, for me, and you and all of us. He should have omitted the “me” and said “All of us.” Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you... my yoke is easy and my burden light.” Alfred says it must end at the place where men are crucified. Admitted we must endure chastening but it does not always end at Calvary’s Tree, for it was there that the dominion of Sin ended for those who died with Jesus in symbol.

Alfred seems to imply that our salvation depends on doing what Jesus did, he says in effect (personating Jesus), “You must accept the cross as your own proper way to salvation, so take up a cross every one of you, and come with me to the place where men are crucified!”

We are not expected to do this literally, for not even Peter, James, John and all who followed Jesus and were, some of them, put to death, could even redeem anyone. This was the unique purpose of the birth of Jesus, the Redemptive Price, the Ransom for all, The Lamb of God. (Matthew 20:28 and 1 Timothy 2:6).

Bottom paragraph of page 10 is Alfred’s warning to all Christadelphians who believe Adam’s nature was changed to sinful flesh with a compulsive tendency to commit sin. He says, “It was not Peter’s fault that

he was born the way he was, but it would have been his grievous and fatal fault if he had declined to confess and deplore the nature he bore.”

I ask, was it a fault that Peter was born in the nature in which God created Adam? Peter would not have been born at all if God had not spared Adam from the death sentence he had incurred by sin in Eden. Nowhere in Scripture are we told to deplore Our physical nature but to deplore the unlawful deeds and choose the right. Peter was upholding what he considered was right. “Lord this shall not be unto thee,” in that he recognized Jesus was not worthy of being put to death by sinners, which was true, but Peter did not realize at that time that God was allowing it with the full consent of Jesus to fulfil what the Scriptures prophesied of Him. Is not the case of John the Baptist similar? “No, Jesus, I know your character, you have no need to repent, I have need to be baptized of thee and comest thou to me?” John did not know Him then as the Messiah, or that this was about to be revealed unto him. But he knew from God that upon whom he saw the Spirit descending and remaining on him that this would be the one for whom he was appointed to prepare the Way. John did not block the way when Jesus said, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” John did not deplore the nature he bore he only contrasted it as temporal with the Word of God which abideth forever. It was not Jesus’ fault that He was born with a nature identical with that of Adam’s when created as a living soul, it was absolutely necessary in that Jesus should prove complete obedience was possible in that same nature, in order that the Creator should be Justified in condemning Adam’s sin, and not the nature in which obedience was possible. It was no fault at all that Jesus found Himself in a nature of capability of either obedience or disobedience, but if that Adamic nature had been changed as a consequence of Adam’s sin, who was at fault in changing it? And who was it that changed it? The answer to this question is found in the Christadelphian Statement of Faith, Clause V. where we find the answer to be Adam’s Creator, for I cannot conceive that Adam had the ability to, or necessity to alter a nature which was already corruptible, or to cause it to be more inclined to sin when the Creator’s conditions for continuance of natural life had already been breached.

Therefore it must be conceded that according to their Clause V and their teaching here endorsed by Alfred Norris that the fault must be attributed to The Creator of all things. God forbid! What nonsense!

It is the universal doctrine of the Roman Apostasy which crept into the early Ecclesia of Christ, it is the theme of this treatise by A.D.Norris where, in my view, nothing has improved the position of Christadelphianism which has always been a dividing factor of their history.

I implore therefore that Alfred, in the light of my humble reply to him, that he and all of similar views and theories of the false doctrine of “Changed flesh” Clause V (not found in the Genesis account), but an invention of man, reconsider the seriousness of their position doctrinally and eternally while light is available freely. Isaiah 55:1-3, Do not regard this as not applicable to you when you sing it in your meeting places; do it.

We are not expected to do this literally, for not even Peter, James, John and all who followed Jesus and were, some of them, put to death, could even redeem anyone. This was the unique purpose of the birth of Jesus, the Redemptive Price, the Ransom for all, The Lamb of God. (Matthew 20:28 and 1 Timothy 2:6).

Bottom paragraph of page 10 is Alfred’s warning to all Christadelphians who believe Adam’s nature was changed to sinful flesh with a compulsive tendency to commit sin. He says, “It was not Peter’s fault that he was born the way he was, but it would have been his grievous and fatal fault if he had declined to confess and deplore the nature he bore.”

The character of Jesus was indeed made perfect through sufferings and not as Alfred falsely states, “through death.” Jesus before death on Calvary had all the qualities for change to incorruptible nature, therefore His death was not compulsory for us nor for Himself as Alfred informs us it was. Jesus offered Himself willingly to God, and God made Him to be a sin-offering for us at 33½ years of age that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, He having known no sin.

Under “HEBREWS (in summary)” bottom of page 6, I referred to Alfred’s interpolation “How much more will the dying of Christ cleanse the spirit?” The writer to Hebrews correctly states “The blood of Christ” which means the life of Christ in the blood; but you can see that Alfred’s motive is more degrading

and subtle of the loving sacrifice of Christ than anything the serpent generation of the Jewish rulers and Priests could bring against Him, and I make no apology for saying so for it is the whole theme of your subtle reasoning, Alfred.

If under this heading of Hebrews Aaron offered first for his own sins before being fit to offer sacrifice for the people (Hebrews 7:27). In contrast, what sins did Jesus offer for when He was not even a Priest and could not be while on earth? (Hebrews 8:1-4). Was not Jesus the Lamb God provided as the anti-type to take away the Sin of the world?

This is the whole kernel of the Gospel of Salvation which we preach. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" – as saith the word of God through Isaiah, chapter 6 verses 8 to 10. He that hath an ear, let him hear my Son, saith the Lord God.

To the Great Name of Yahweh through him who loved us and gave himself for us, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and evermore.

Brother Phil Parry.

The second letter in response to A.D.Norris is from Dr John Stevenson:-

Dear Brother Norris, Your very long article poses a problem, because it completely fails to come to the point. You have not answered any of our contentions which are supported from Scripture. You could have better limited yourself to these words:"

"The Law failed to provide a basis of righteousness for sinners because the nature of flesh stood in the way. In Romans 7 Paul spoke of the inmost need of a sin-bound body. It was not his fault that he was born the way he was, Neither Paul nor Peter nor Jesus were responsible for the sinful nature they bore, their hereditary from Adam and Eve provided this. Peter was told and Paul came to recognize, that the right thing to do with one's fleshly nature was to crucify it. So for the Lord Himself, the nature He bore was inborn in Him. The right thing to do, for one so innocently afflicted with the likeness of flesh of sin, was to see to it that flesh of sin was humbled and brought to nought. So the Lord Jesus accepted the office of becoming an offering for sin, and in His own flesh condemned the sin to which He had never yielded."

These are your own words, and if you had limited yourself to that, your message would have been perfectly clear in its unscriptural nakedness. But you chose to confuse and swamp it with seven thousand extra words which were intended to show that you know the Bible and were earnestly trying to understand the problem, which you misrepresent in your introductory paragraph as being difficult and confusing by saying you do not want to encumber your thinking with an elaborate sacrificial vocabulary, or to overlay your devotion with a heavy elaboration of types and antitypes, etc. I must retort that your contrivance is typical of a leading card-carrying member of the Central Christadelphian Fellowship, and it might mislead many readers to believe that the subject is too difficult for people who lack a prolonged spiritual education. But we of the Nazarene Fellowship have gone back to Scripture and found the B.A.S.F. dismally wanting. I am sorry to be so passionately critical, but it is difficult to be patient when the issues have been carefully thrashed out in clear detail endlessly over the past century and a quarter.

Paul and Peter and Jesus were NOT born with an evil physical nature or sinful flesh inherited from Adam and Eve. But they were born, like all of us, with the capacity to learn to differentiate between good and evil, and to practice righteousness and refrain from wrongdoing. Jesus showed that it could be done. It seems that Paul, after his conversion, also showed that it could be done. Scripture tells us that God loved the

world, and through Jesus, loved us while we were yet sinners. Nowhere does Scripture tell us that God detested sinful flesh, and required it to be humiliated and destroyed on the cross.

You say “But of course those holy men of God spoke with authority and divinely granted discernment, purged of the limitations which afflict all of us who now have no open vision.” That sentence is advocating blind unquestioning loyalty to your pernicious teaching. We agree that they spoke with authority, but they had no monopoly of discernment, which is the prerogative and obligation of all of us in scriptural matters.

You say “The Law failed to provide a basis of righteousness for sinners because the nature of flesh stood in its way,” then you quote Romans 7 as though Paul was speaking of his present status as an enlightened convert; commenting further “he did not make himself that way; it was not his fault that he was so born.” This sick argument has been done to death over the past century, and I think it is fair to say that a misunderstanding of Romans chapter 7 is the basis of Christadelphian’s erroneous belief in sin-in-the-flesh. Such misunderstanding contradicts Paul’s teachings in the adjoining chapters of Romans. The fact is that Paul uses the word “flesh” as a metaphor for unrestrained animal passions. The literal flesh of Adam and Eve was no different after the transgression from what it was before.

Similarly, the literal flesh of a criminal is no different to the literal flesh of a saint. These are facts that Christadelphians cannot and will not acknowledge. Sinful describes attitudes and actions, not literal flesh,

I cannot agree with your suggestion that Peter denied Jesus three times because he had a false conception of the Messiah’s agenda. I think the denial was due to a confused, terror-stricken, panicky state of mind. And on what basis do you decide that the penitent thief “came to a true understanding of sin”?

You say “Though afflicted with the disposition towards sin which He shared with us all, He resisted temptation whenever it assailed Him, but each victory won a battle only, and the war continued for so long as the fleshly nature remained alive.” It seems to me that the war ended in the wilderness just before Jesus commenced His ministry. “We accept the message of surrender given by the Lord in His embracing of the Cross, seeing in this His own complete victory over sin.” Yes, over sin, not over sinful flesh. And Jesus did not “embrace” the Cross; how could anyone infer that? He was nailed there by the servants of sin. I could go on and on, but I fear, brother Norris, that you, and all Christadelphia, really are lacking discernment and open vision.

May the Lord open your eyes while there is yet time. Brother John Stevenson

This third response is from Brother Allon Maxwell,

**A FEW COMMENTS ON THE ARTICLE BY ALFRED NORRIS
“CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS”**

First, I take notice of Alfred’s qualification as a “card-carrying member of the Central Christadelphian Fellowship.”

For the first 40 years of my life, I also was a “card-carrying Christadelphian” (although, due to the complexities of Christadelphian “fellowship arrangements” between England and Australia, only the latter part of that time was in “Unity” with the “Central Fellowship”). I remember with pleasure, meeting him in person, briefly, in Newcastle, NSW, and hearing him speak at a Christadelphian conference in Brisbane, Queensland, sometime around 1970. He impressed me then as an “intellectual giant”, and to this day, he still has my deepest respect.

However, some 26 years ago now, my own “Christadelphian card” was cancelled, due to my inability to accept Central Fellowship teaching on the Atonement. On this subject, while respect and love both remain

intact, there is fundamental disagreement, especially about the reason for the death of Jesus proposed in Alfred's article.

May I respectfully suggest that the title for his article, "Christ Died For Our Sins" should probably be viewed as a misnomer! Reading carefully behind the maze of words, the real emphasis appears to be something more like "Christ Died To Save Himself From Potential Sin"!

The following three brief excerpts pin-point the source of my concern:-

"...by allowing His body to be done to death on the Cross, the Lord had removed from His mortal body all that could have resisted the will of God, and made possible His exaltation."

And:-

"The Lord had pin-pointed the source from which men's sins sprang and had removed it."

And:-

"To lay down His life while still sinless was the Lord Jesus' only way to final and unchallengeable victory, a victory which was achieved when He "became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." The subsequent high exaltation of the Lord Jesus, now for ever freed from the impulses which characterize our flesh, qualifies Him in every regard to be Priest for His own people, conqueror of the nations when He returns, and purging the world of all unrighteousness and its consequences before He presents the entirely perfected work to His Father. Only in this way was His perfection to be attained, as all four uses of the word "to perfect" about Him in the New Testament convincingly show."

Have I understood him correctly? Does he really mean that for Jesus, the Cross was the only available means of escape from inherent temptations that might otherwise (inevitably?) lead Him to sin? Does he really mean that this was THE REASON for His sacrificial death?

Actually, I would hope that he might recoil in horror at that condensed "reader's summary" of the meaning which I take from his words. But since it is what I have heard many other Christadelphians say, and since he does represent himself as presenting "common Christadelphian belief," it does seem logical to conclude that he did mean to say this.

I invite him to correct me if it does not do justice to his intended meaning.

1. THE CROSS - DEFEAT OR VICTORY

Jesus claimed that He had overcome the world before He died, (John 16:33). The speculative invention of a theory that requires the death of Jesus because of personal need to save Himself from further temptation and potential failure, detracts from the strength of that claim! To retire from the battle in that way, for that reason, would sound much more like a concession to defeat by the flesh rather than victory over the flesh!

2 DID JESUS DIE FOR HIS OWN NEED - OR FOR OURS?

I suppose that if one totally ignores the real emphasis of Scripture, and delves into the non-existent realm of "what if", it could be construed that there might have been some sort of failure on the part of Jesus, if He had not loved us enough to die for us. But alas... digging into the "what ifs" in that way, is both speculative and pointless in the light of the realities of "what is."

Let us stay with the realities of the reasons for what actually did happen.

The reality is that we sinned... we incurred a justly deserved penalty... God did love us... Jesus did love us... and the two of them worked together to rescue us, both from the penalty of our sins, and also from the guilt, and the self-imposed slavery resulting from the continuing practice of sin.

Thus it happened that “Christ died for our sins... in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:5).

To quote another “card-carrying member of the Central Christadelphian Fellowship”: - “The confusion arises when we separate Him from His work. He was there to be our Saviour, and but for our needs we may reverently say He would not have been there.” (John Carter, in “Christadelphian Unity in Australia - The Accepted Basis”),

3. RANSOM AND REDEMPTION

It is disappointing to notice that, while Alfred did mention the word “ransom,” he did so once only and then only to dismiss it without exploring its relevance to our need for a ransom to be paid.

“Redemption” was not mentioned at all.

That is a pity. Certainly those two words are not the whole picture. But they are unquestionably central to any Biblical understanding of just what was done for us on the Cross. They should not be ignored or dismissed in favour of speculation about “what might have happened” to Jesus if He had not “loved us and given Himself for us” (Galatians 2:20).

Of course, the whole of the life of Jesus was a “sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 13:15). Without that He would not have been uniquely qualified to “die for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3) as “a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:19).

But it is “Ransom” which is the word employed by Jesus to describe the purpose for the surrender of His life on the Cross (Mark 10:45). Certainly His death was a part of His total obedience to the constraints of love for God, and love for His neighbour. But it was for our need, not His own, that the ransom was necessary.

The use of that word implies that the surrender of His life in the awful suffering of the Cross, has paid in full, all that was necessary to release us from our own fearful expectation of future judgment, condemnation, and death for our sins (1 John 4:18,19). Of course, (addressing a common evangelical misconception) this does not mean that “Christ has done it all, and there is nothing left for us to do.” But it certainly does mean that we are now free to repent of our sins, be forgiven, and then “by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality” (Romans 2:7).

“Redeem” is another word used by Paul to describe the price paid to purchase our release (Galatians 4:5 and Titus 2:14) from slavery to another master (Romans 6:16-18) in order to become adopted sons of God. The effective connotations of “redemption” are very similar to those of “ransom.” A price was paid, and that price was the sacrificial surrender of the life of Jesus on the Cross. Peter emphasizes this by pointing us to the blood that was shed in the process (1 Peter 1:18).

Paul builds on this concept of “ransom” or “redemption” to say that since we were “bought with a price” our primary responsibility to the one who has purchased us, is to “glorify God in our body” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

4. SUBSTITUTION?

This is another word which Alfred summarily dismissed in the same inadequate few words as he used for “ransom.” Of course the word itself is not in the Bible. Nevertheless, it is certainly implied in the concepts of “Ransom” and “Redemption,” both of which tell us that a price was paid in exchange for our release. Both words mean that one thing was exchanged for something else, from which it is easy to infer substitution.

Further, it is difficult to see how a “substitutionary metaphor” (Alfred’s words) can be avoided in such passages as:-

“Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). And, “So shall He, my servant, vindicate many, Himself bearing the penalty of our guilt” (Isaiah 53:11. NEB.).

Did Jesus deserve that awful death? By no means! God declared Him innocent by raising Him from the dead.

Then who did deserve such a death? For all of the rest of us, it would have been no more than “the due reward for our deeds” (Luke 23:41),

From this “due reward for our deeds” we have been saved - by the ransom paid by Jesus. For all who have thus been ransomed, and who share in the first resurrection, the second death will have no power.

Our salvation from the penalty which we truly deserved was achieved by Jesus suffering a penalty which He did not deserve. But of course, before it can be personally effective we must first believe the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and then “repent and turn to God, and perform deeds worthy of our repentance” (Acts 26:20).

For those who walk this narrow road, there is this assurance, not to be held in presumption, but accepted in simple faith:-

“What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn: Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Romans 8:32-35).

Then, when on the day of Resurrection and Judgment, our names are found written in the Book of Life, the second death will have no power over us (Revelation 20:6) and Death will be swallowed up in victory, as mortality gives place to immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51- 54).

Brother Allon Maxwell

Our fourth response to Alfred Norris is by Russell Gregory:-

Dear Brother Alfred, Let me thank you for the presentation of your views on the doctrine of the Atonement. The sincerity expressed in your presentation is very much appreciated and so it grieves me all the more that your treatise contains what I consider some awful, life-threatening errors. On account of these it cannot be right to let them pass without an attempt being made to set out a more scriptural understanding.

You know the Scriptures extremely well and you write freely and fluently, but you overlook the reason for the temptation of Adam and Eve and the lessons of its outcome. In so doing no one is able to understand why Christ died, and, where is your understanding shown in repeatedly stating that Christ died for our sins and quoting many passages to support that declaration without showing how His death took away the sin of the world? Neither do you tell us why our sins can be forgiven only through Him. By your repetition of how bad is human nature and how well Jesus did in overcoming every temptation you seem to think you have proved your case, you also make it touch and go with Jesus right to the end of His life whether He would or would not remain perfect and it appears a relief to you that His crucifixion was not left to chance any longer in case He failed and God’s whole plan of Salvation would be in ruins.

In this reply you will find constructive criticism of a selection of phrases drawn from your treatise. These are far from all the extracts to which we take exception but the discerning Bible student will see which view is in keeping with Scripture. Following the selection of phrases drawn from your treatise there are short sections on Substitution, Ownership, Alienation and Reconciliation.

You write, “Elaborate sacrificial vocabulary” and “heavy elaboration of types and antitypes”

You seem so fearful of allowing your “thinking to be encumbered by elaborate sacrificial vocabulary” and your “devotion to be overlaid with heavy elaboration of types and antitypes” that you do not recognize the more important matters and fail to see how the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ achieved our Salvation, and you choose to ignore the purpose of those types and antitypes (with few exceptions) which were written for our learning, till you are lost for want of reason and logic. From the start you implant the notion that the Bible student must expect “encumbrances” and “heavy elaborations” but these are found in Christadelphian writings, not in Scripture. Bible teaching is surprisingly simple, that a child can grasp its concepts.

You write, “Holy men of God spoke with... divinely granted discernment, purged of the limitations which afflict all of us who now have no open vision.”

Cannot the faithful of all ages have divinely granted discernment for the asking? Who has scales before their eyes preventing them from seeing what God is trying to teach them?

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7), Surely one can seek to know the truth of Bible teaching and expect, by the grace of God, to find it; then knock on the door of understanding that it may be opened, so we can understand both God’s will and purpose with us; and ask for wisdom from above that we may use our knowledge and understanding with wisdom, to honour and glorify our loving Creator. Knowledge, understanding and wisdom is available to all through fervent, effectual prayer.

You write, “The closing words of Genesis 2 are an omen of bad things to come:- “They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”

In the closing words of Genesis 2 there is a wonderful parallel looking forward to the other Son of God and His Bride -

This second Adam counselled those who were to constitute His Bride to “buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:18). You may say, and quite rightly, that the Bride is clothed with white raiment, but the white raiment is the righteousness provided by the Groom through the forgiveness He made available, that His elect should be able to come before His Father in His Name and stand before Him no longer ashamed of their sins for they have been forgiven. Forgiveness, or the taking away of sin, is all the clothing the Bride needs. There is no shame before God except in sin.

You write, “So fundamental was that ultimate picture of a lustless society that Genesis uses it as a springboard to mark the change which took place once the forbidden fruit had been tasted.”

There is in this statement the insinuation that the change from sinless flesh to sinful flesh took place at the time of eating the forbidden fruit. We have come across many and varied notions of when the supposed change took place and all are as empty as this one. You endeavour to show that the flesh of Adam and Eve changed from sinless flesh to flesh full of sin when the “society” changed from a lustless society to a lustful society. Your argument doesn’t exist, as it was not a lustless society in the Garden of Eden. Have you forgotten that Eve was tempted? The moment law was introduced to man then lust also came, which is the desire to rebel against the law. Where then is your lustless society if lust came with the choice provided by law? Where there is law there is choice, and where there is choice there is the opportunity to lust.

Law was introduced to build character. It gave Adam and Eve the opportunity to either rebel against it (lust), or they could “Resist the devil” and he (it – lust) would flee from them.

Thus your so-called argument as to when the change in their flesh took place, being invalid, only goes to show that no change took place.

You write, “Nakedness was the response of a bad conscience towards God.”

Was it not their guilt in transgressing which made them ashamed and fearful? There is no indication that Adam and Eve were ever ashamed or fearful of each other after their transgression, but of being seen by God and the angels. Have there ever been a loving bride and groom ashamed of their nakedness? Indeed in such a loving relationship nakedness is a matter of shared joy and should that joy fade it is because of lack of forgiveness between them through the hardness of their hearts, and forgiveness from the heart restores their relationship to its initial joy. But a devoted couple would not be seen naked in public - their good conscience toward God would not allow it, yet you say, “After the fall nakedness was the response of a bad conscience towards God,” and I cannot think what you mean by this for you do not say, but if you mean that the shame of their nakedness was the response of a guilty conscience toward God then I would agree, but I would suggest that anyone with a bad conscience is unlikely to feel shame.

You write, “Morbid awareness of nakedness”

Your claim that “morbid awareness of nakedness provoked shame in the presence of the Creator,” sets the disordered scene for what you have to say about sinful flesh, by applying the term morbid both to the mind (morbid = unwholesome ideas) and to the flesh (morbid = unwholesome flesh) as though they were the same - making “the deep-rooted corruption of their hearts” to be “the obstruction offered by the flesh.” What havoc you cause by mixing things that differ - that is, the literal flesh with unlawful desires encompassed in “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16).

You write, “A spread of actual evil... burgeoned in the period between that Fall and the Flood”

It was not evil which burgeoned for that was bad from the beginning. When we have the first four people named, Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel, one of them was a murderer. How much did evil burgeon after that? Not at all. What burgeoned was the number of people on the earth and if one in every four had been a murderer one could still not say that evil had burgeoned but had maintained a steady level. The desire for over dramatization seems compelling.

You write, “No matter what steps are taken to correct them, (our human dispositions) continue to assert themselves regardless.”

It is not possible to feel anything but sorrow for such a person as finds this to be the case. The Christian who seeks earnestly to serve His Master finds it easier as he goes through life, though he meet with ever greater trials. “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). It is perhaps true to say that once one yields to temptation one’s resolve is weakened by it, but if this is so then the opposite must be true, that if one’s resolve and integrity remain intact then one has taken good positive steps to make overcoming temptation easier for the future. Practice makes perfect, and our bad dispositions do not assert themselves regardless anymore. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:7,8).

Our trials and tribulations are our opportunities to please and serve our Creator and Jesus Christ. Paul confirmed this in the following two passages:- Romans 5:3 - “We have access by faith into his grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God and not only so, but we glory in tribulations.” and 2 Corinthians 7:4, “Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorifying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.” Paul rejoiced in tribulations because it was a means to an end.

You write, “Massive further evidence is available to leave our desperate plight in no doubt”

You seem to be saying that the desperate plight we need delivering from is the wickedness of evil people. You don't make it at all clear that the desperate plight you are talking about is “sinful flesh,” and not till later do you tell us that we are not supposed to be able to control our desires to conform to God's will.

The large majority of the human race never hear the gospel message and are not offered hope of eternal life. We see their misery, pain and sorrow, their hopes and disillusionments, but if they are not called they cannot be chosen. There is massive further evidence of their plight but the crucifixion of Jesus Christ will not help them, and neither is it the “desperate plight” from which we look for deliverance.

Your final sentence in this section; “Without God to help there can be no deliverance from sin...” is true enough but here, at the end of a catalogue of man's evil ways, it has no relevance. When Paul says “His servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness” he is personifying “sin” as a Master; he then continues “we were the servants of sin... but have been made free from sin” (Romans 6:16). Surely it is obvious that sin has nothing to do with literal flesh. Sin is wrong action - it is transgression of law - it is abstract.

The fact is that the desperate plight we cannot escape from without following God's plan of salvation is the condemnation brought upon us through the sin of Adam. His plan is for us to come out of Adam and into Christ.

You write, “The Scriptures are much more deeply involved in deliverance from sin than they are in the quite secondary deliverance from death”

Not true! Being delivered from the bondage to sin through the Love of Jesus Christ in giving Himself as the Sacrifice for sin we are at the same time delivered from death and the two cannot be separated. So it is not possible for the Scriptures to be as you claim.

The fact is that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for one reason and one reason only, so that we can have deliverance from death. He died to take away the sin of the world. “The Lord is not willing that any should perish (“the quite secondary deliverance”, you say) but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). And there you have it - The Lord makes them to be absolutely inseparable in His will and purpose. This is again confirmed by the Holy Spirit upon Zacharias, where we are told that John the Baptist came “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins” (Luke 2:77).

You write, “God sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”

It is common knowledge that we have a bad translation in Romans 8:3 but it is not such common knowledge that the B.A.S.F. depends upon the bad translation and sections of it would fall apart once the translation is corrected. The term “sinful flesh” should read “sin's flesh,” and we know there are those who say they cannot see the difference but it should be obvious that there is a difference between “flesh full of sin” and “flesh belonging to sin” as a Master, and it is this latter sense in which Paul uses it.

You write, “Condemned sin(,) in the flesh”

You have been meticulous in your punctuation which makes your insertion of a comma in Romans 8:3, which you enclose in brackets, the more noticeable. It is the Nazarene Fellowship rather than the Christadelphians who agree with the point you are making, that the expression sin-in-the-flesh does not carry the sense Paul meant. Surely Paul uses the expression “in the flesh” in the same way as Peter when he wrote, “For as much then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh” (1 Peter 4:1), that is, Jesus Christ suffered for us while He was in the flesh and, that is when He condemned sin. But Jesus Christ did not condemn sin by giving Himself as the sin-offering; He condemned sin by showing that there is no need for us to sin and that we can, if we choose, be as perfect in obedience to God's will as He.

We know that “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16), and we are told “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1 Corinthians 1:27), so “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). Common sense should tell us that the apostle is not speaking of literal flesh in these passages but of worldly wise people who seek worldly pleasures. In any case Paul explains this in the context of this first chapter of his letter to the Corinthians. We are not estranged from God because of sinful flesh but because of sin.

The fact is that we have become estranged from God through yielding to lust, and lust is in the mind, as Paul says, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works,” but this doesn’t have to be the case, to the faithful he says, “yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight” (Colossians 1:21,22). There was nothing wrong with the flesh of Jesus when He offered Himself as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, and reconciled us to God. We were not reconciled to God through a body of sin. Jesus said, “The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world” (John 6:33), and again he said, “the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51). No Presiding Brother at the Memorial Table would dare to refer to the body and blood of Jesus Christ as sinful for fear of blasphemy, yet away from the Table of the Lord it is a different story. There is a double standard.

You write, “What the law failed to do was to provide a basis of righteousness for sinners.”

Another statement that is not true! God has always desired that men and women should worship Him in Spirit and in truth and all who did so and kept the law were considered righteous for they showed the faith of Abraham. One false claim leads to another for you go on to say, “It failed because the nature of ‘flesh’ stood in its way. And the obstruction offered by flesh was that it would not willingly conform to the standards the Law laid down.” The flesh does not have a will - only the mind has a will.

What the law could not do was take away sin. All the sacrifices for sin before Christ gave provisional covering for sin, they did not take sin away. Jesus Christ gave Himself to be the Sacrifice for sin, to take it away. He came “to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:11,12,26). And God forgives us, not for our sakes, but for Christ’s sake, as we read in Ephesians 4:32 - “even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

You write, “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me, but to perform that which is good I find not...”

It is extraordinary to find a Bible expositor who believes he can apply these verses to himself as a follower of Christ, especially after Paul’s declaration that those in Christ are freed from sin. (Romans 6:22). Dr. Thomas recognized Paul’s use of “in the flesh” as opposed to “in the Spirit” when he wrote regarding these verses; - “The apostle affirms this of himself considered as an unenlightened son of the flesh.”

It is worth quoting Dr. Adam Clarke’s comment on this section of Romans chapter 7, for he says: “It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the Church, or prevailed there, that the Apostle speaks here of his regenerate state, and that what was, in such a state, true to himself, must be true of all others in the same state. This opinion, most pitifully and most shamefully not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and disgraced its character.” To which we say, Amen.

The illustration Paul gives at the beginning of Romans 7 is of a wife bound to her husband while he lives, but if he dies she is free from that bond and can be bound to another. Paul compares this to our being bound to the law of sin and death but through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, who destroyed the power of sin which condemned us; we are freed from that bondage and can be bound to Him instead. In other words we are “dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead” (verse 4).

Paul's first state, that of being bound to, and condemned by, the law of sin and death, he refers to as being "in the flesh," and whatever he did in that state could only "bring forth fruit unto death" (verse 5). But now being in Christ, having died with Him in baptism, he served "in newness of spirit" - verse 6, for he was no longer in the flesh but in the spirit. It was in this first state of being bound to the law of sin and death of which Paul was speaking when he said "in me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." Then when he was "in Christ," he said "I can do all things through Jesus Christ which strengtheneth me."

Likewise, we too were in bondage to the law of sin and death, when we were "in the flesh," and before "our old man" was destroyed. We served sin, and sin reigned in our mortal bodies. But through baptism into Christ's death, we became dead to the law of sin and death that we should be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead.

When Paul asks at verse 24, "Who shall deliver me...?" what was he delivered from? and the answer is that he was delivered from the law of sin and death which condemned him. Then he thanks God for his deliverance and continues, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Contradictions

Contradictions appear if we try to apply verses 7 to 23 of chapter 7 to the disciples of Jesus Christ. Contradictions such as:-

between having been delivered and not having been delivered;

for verse 15 of chapter 7 reads, "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" is not in keeping with Romans 6:16, where we read - "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?," and 1 Thessalonians 1:6. "ye became followers of us and of the Lord."

Again, verse 17, "It is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me" would contradict 1 Corinthians 11:2, "Remember me in all things and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you"

Also verse 19, "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" is incompatible with 1 Corinthians 4:16, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me"

And verse 20, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," contradicts Philippians 3:17, "Be ye followers of me even as I am of Jesus Christ"

The view of Romans 7 where you apply verse 18 to yourself as a disciple of Jesus - "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not," is a contradiction to Paul's message and opposes the exhortation of Paul to "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

You write, "It was not Peter's fault that he was born the way he was but it would have been his grievous and fatal fault if he had declined to confess and deplore the nature he bore"

While you do not seem to approve of the expression sin-in-the-flesh you keep all its trappings. Why should God make us with a nature we should "confess and deplore" when Adam and Eve were just as capable of sinning in their good flesh as we are in what you call sinful flesh? No Christadelphian has given a sensible answer to this matter!

The fact is that the nature Peter bore was the nature God gave him. It was the same nature which God gave to Adam at creation and to Jesus Christ and to all of us, and it is perfectly good for the purpose of our present lives. To suppose for one moment that a God-given gift, so "fearfully and wonderfully made", in which is housed the "mind of the Spirit" and in which we serve our Creator, should be an object to "confess and deplore" is grotesque.

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

You write, “Peter continued to confront his Lord’s call to self-denial and cross-bearing with a continued “This shall not be unto Thee!” He could have found no salvation. But when he ceased to be Satan and fell in line behind his Lord, then salvation was his for the faithful continuance in asking.

This is the opposite of the truth. Continuance of asking for something already granted does not show any faith at all but the lack of it. Certainly salvation can be lost again by foolish conduct but it is the present possession of the faithful. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

You write, “There is not the uncomplicated one-to-one relationship between baptism and conversion which one might like to think.”

The complication is one of your own making; by trying to attach one meaning only to the Greek word “*epistrepho*” which is here translated “converted.” (Luke 22:32). The Emphatic Diaglott translates it as “turned.” There was no doubt that Peter understood the fact that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and he didn’t need converting to this belief.

But Peter was about to show weakness under extreme circumstances and in fear he turned away from the dreadful prospect of being crucified with Christ, for which he was hardly prepared, and his faith failed him for the moment, but later having experienced this trial, he was better able to strengthen his brethren who may face unexpected and severe trials.

The Greek word “*epistrepho*” is used in several ways and while it is often applied to a change of mind it can also be used in the literal sense as in turning one’s self as in Acts 9:40, “Peter turning (*epistrepho*) to the body, said, Tabitha, arise.” Again in Acts 16:18, “But Paul, being grieved, turned (*epistrepho*) and said to the spirit...” Also it is used in the raising of Jairus’ daughter when “her spirit came again (*epistrepho*).”

You have no justification therefore in concluding from this statement of Jesus Christ that Peter’s understanding had a long way to go before his conversion was complete. The fact is that there remains the uncomplicated one-to-one relationship between baptism and conversion because baptism is “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Peter 3:21).

You write, “He did not come to be afforded honours, nor to encourage His disciples to do so.”

How can you make such a bald statement? Certainly Jesus Christ did not seek high position among men in this present age. He taught that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God, He was nevertheless the greatest Prophet, Priest and King this world has known, and the world was His. He was determined He should gain the whole world and be afforded these honours - by first coming as a servant to minister and give His life a ransom for the sin of the world. He knew the honour which would come to Him in due course, and no one worked harder for it. He gave all He had - Matthew 13:44, “The Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” Jesus Christ gave His life to buy the world. And Jesus Christ knew that “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow” (Philippians 2:10), and that “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (John 5:23).

As for not encouraging His disciple to seek honours the opposite is true. Jesus Christ encouraged them to seek the highest honours possible that they should be rewarded with honour. “Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12). Again, Paul exhorts the disciples - “By patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (Romans 2:7). And again, “he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). And the outcome of their diligence in seeking is told by Jesus Christ - “Then shall the

righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43). “Seek ye first the kingdom of God.”

You write, “In the passage concerning the Good Shepherd the Lord showed that He was not compelled to yield to the evil designs of men, but did so voluntarily.”

We agree wholeheartedly with this statement, but a little later regarding His crucifixion, you say, “This was the only way.” Crediting that you do not intend to contradict yourself then your view must be that Jesus Christ had to die by crucifixion or die as a sinner for not yielding to crucifixion! What sort of choice is that?

But the facts are given us by Jesus Christ Himself - “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). Surely there can be no doubt that here Jesus was referring to Himself, and that if He chose He could enter heaven alone and avoid the crucifixion. He confirmed this when He said, “Thinkest thou not that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53). A request for Divine intervention to avoid His murder was not wrong or sinful and God would have granted Him the angels for the asking, which surely proves the case. So it is not true to say there was no other way for Jesus Christ - He had a genuine choice, and what He did was for us, out of His love for us and not for Himself; though I would add that it was also for the joy set before Him in bringing many sons to glory.

You write, “The culmination of the work of Atonement”

You carry yourself away on the tide of encumbrance and elaborate sacrificial vocabulary! You make the claim that Jesus’ work as High Priest at the right hand of God “is set out as the culmination of the work of Atonement in not a few passages of Scripture,” but the culmination of Jesus work of Atonement was His Sacrifice on Calvary.

The Old Testament teaching regarding sacrifices is that there is no atonement without the shedding of blood. The life blood of the animal was shed in place of the life blood of the sinner and so atonement was made. Leviticus 17:11, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for your soul.”

The New Testament confirms this: Romans 5:11, “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” Once Jesus Christ had shed His blood for us, His work of Atonement was complete. The passages you quote show Him as “a merciful and faithful high priest” through whom we “find grace to help in time of need” and “who maketh intercession for us.” This is not the culmination of His work of Atonement but the new position as our Great High Priest after His resurrection.

You write, A Few Thoughts on the Subject of Substitution

By going the extra mile, turning the other cheek and giving our cloak also (Matthew 5:38-42), we do God’s will by going beyond the requirements of the Law, and Jesus set us the example in all these things for He would not expect more of us than of Himself. The supreme example of doing His Father’s will, of course, is when He accepted the role of the Lamb of God and “gave himself for our sins... according to the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:4). There was no Law requiring this self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ but He demonstrated that “greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13), and thereby showing the greatest love it is possible for any man to comprehend.

We have already quoted Paul, “Be ye followers of me even as I am of Jesus Christ,” so let us turn to an example in the life of the Apostle Paul with a view to looking at the idea of substitution, in which he followed the pattern set us. I refer to Philemon, verses 16 to 19.

Here is a slave who has run away from his master and it seems both slave and master have been converted, quite separately, to Christ, and Paul seeks their reconciliation:- “Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?”

If thou therefore count me a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.”

What a wonderful illustration of following the example of Jesus Christ! And it shows substitution. Paul says he will repay any debt owed by the repentant slave. He wants to pay instead of the debt being charged to the slave. There is not a better illustration of what Jesus Christ has done for us in paying the debt no one else was able to meet.

While the law of redemption (Leviticus 25:47-55) gave a person the right to redeem his next of kin from bondage, it was not his legal obligation to do so, but by “going the extra mile,” as it were, that person would be doing God’s will, which would be well pleasing to Him. Jesus Christ was in such a position to redeem His next of kin. He alone could buy them back from their bondage to sin’s condemnation. His own eternal life was assured for obedience to the law and this did not include yielding Himself to crucifixion, which makes your claim that “what was accomplished by (His crucifixion) removed all obstacles to the heavenly exaltation of the Lord” to be null and void. What He accomplished by His crucifixion removed all obstacles to our heavenly exaltation.

Next let us consider Romans 5:7,8:- “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Again, this is straightforward substitution, for if in the process of saving another person one should give his own life then it would be said that the latter died for the former. The argument you, brother Alfred, put to me more than forty years ago that “if Christ died instead of us then He should have stayed dead and we should never die,” is utterly without warrant because Jesus Christ did not lose His eternal life, He lost His natural life. His natural life in place of our natural life. Jesus Christ did not receive His natural life again after crucifixion, for that had gone for ever. And neither did Jesus Christ die in order that we should keep our natural life and not die. He died so that we should have natural life with the opportunity of life eternal through forgiveness and faith.

Observe also 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” It is generally accepted that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is given us to replace our unrighteousness and though it is never said, this too is substitution, but we maintain that Jesus Christ took our unrighteousness upon Himself when our sins were laid upon Him (Isaiah 53:6). That is, His righteousness was imputed to us and our unrighteousness was imputed to Him, with the result that we have a natural life and He died in our place, and for our sins, and as our substitute, out of His love for us.

Perceive the teaching of 2 Corinthians 8:9: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” This is the same story. He had a natural life of His own (which made Him rich) and which He gave (which made Him poor) in place of our life which had been forfeited to sin, so that we should have a natural life of our very own (which makes us rich), a life not forfeited to sin.

It is worth quoting Edward Turney here for he expresses himself so well:-

“The life of the race, forfeited by Adam, placing the whole of mankind in debt for the sum of - One Life. The bill paid by the only man who had the price - One Life - His own; received at His birth, new and free, from the source of all life, and preserved by Him by His perfect obedience until the time came when He voluntarily gave it up as the price of our deliverance. This is a true sacrifice; this gives the honour where it is due; this alone adequately meets the Apostle’s reminder: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty, might be rich.”

Ownership and Relationship to God. Alienation and Reconciliation.

Adam was the created son of God and owned by God. When he sinned he was alienated from God for he sold himself to sin and was owned by sin as a Master and came under condemnation. As a consequence of this all in Adam are owned by sin and are under condemnation.

Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He never sinned and so was never owned by sin. He was owned by God. He was flesh which God made in the likeness of the flesh owned by sin. Jesus never needed adoption and He never needed His relationship to His Father to be restored.

Furthermore, whilst Jesus was the Son of God by birth, we through belief and faith can become sons of God by adoption. Thus it is that forgiveness, which is available only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, restores our relationship to God so that we are no longer under condemnation. We conclude therefore that even as our restored relationship is a legal, and not a physical matter then our physical flesh is not changed. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12,13).

Those who are baptized into Christ's death have become reconciled to God; they are no longer alienated; they are in covenant with God through baptism. If alienation had changed the flesh of Adam and Eve then it is only reasonable to suppose that reconciliation through baptism should change it back again, but I know of no one who imagines this to be the case. However, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). Again this is not the literal flesh but the affections of the mind towards the things of the flesh. To crucify the flesh is to bring our minds into subjection to the will of God. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6). It is our minds which we bring into subjection that our wrong desires (our old man) should be destroyed, not our literal bodies, and henceforth we should not serve sin as we did when we were alienated from God.

Again Paul explains, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). But Paul was not literally crucified. It is obvious we are still in the literal flesh and it is equally obvious that there has been no necessity for any change in that flesh. The Apostle Paul confirms this when he wrote, "That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:8). And why are they considered the children of promise? Because they show the faith of Abraham. Are they in literal flesh? Of course they are. The literal flesh is of no consequence in this respect for it is the mind of the flesh which alienates, not the flesh itself.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live" (Romans 8:12,13).

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them (i.e. no adverse judgment against them) which are in Jesus Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1,2).

Furthermore, Paul states, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:9,10).

So let us repeat and conclude that sin does not reside in the literal flesh and that the flesh is as good as God made it in the beginning and it has never changed in its nature - Sinful flesh or Sin-in-the-flesh is a nonsense as sin cannot be considered a quality of the flesh. Paul, when using these expressions is referring to those who serve fleshly desires. "So then they that are in the flesh (serving fleshly desires) cannot please God" (Romans 8:8).

In Conclusion

A surface reading of your treatise may seem plausible to some, but as we have seen, it is sadly lacking in facts, yet there are ample facts given to us by the inspired writers of the Scriptures for us to be able to prove all things. Misleading statements and false claims may appear of small consequence by themselves but collectively you have used them to lead your readers further and further from the Gospel and leave them, and yourself, without any reason for hope.

Christadelphians have long had the choice between the offending sections of the B.A.S.F. and Scripture. Far too long have they held on to the false teaching of the Sinful Flesh theory.

“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve” - Joshua 24:15.

We say with all boldness that this reply is not an alternative view of the Atonement; but the only view compatible with Scripture.

Your brother in earnest sincerity, Russell.

Final Note from Helen Brady -

I hope it will not be thought inappropriate but I should like to end on a personal reminiscence. It came to mind because of the above contribution from A.D.Norris, giving his interpretation of the Sacrifice of Christ alongside our view, ably and succinctly written by Russell.

While I was a child I watched my father Ernest as he wrote and contended for what he profoundly believed to be the truth. He spent many hours writing and he had a volume of correspondence to deal with, much of it I regret to say disagreeable. It did not seem to upset him, it just made him more determined to make his views clear and understandable and he worked tirelessly to that end.

My memory may be at fault here but I think it was probably during the 1950's that my father received a series of anonymous letters discussing various aspects of the truth to which he responded. The correspondence lasted for some considerable time and then ceased. This correspondence came from a Monomark number and address. My father's letters were forwarded via this Monomark to the anonymous writer. Months or it may even have been years later A.D.Norris wrote to my father probably after the publication of the pamphlet called The Norris Confession. Father recognized the type face as that of his anonymous Monomark correspondent and responded to the letter from A.D.Norris via the Monomark, and Mr Norris admitted that he had been rumbled!

Russell and I send our love and good wishes to all with grateful thanks for the kind letters and contributions both financial and written received in the past weeks.

Helen Brady
