

MEMBERS' LETTERS

From Mr. R.T. Georges of 33, Ramillies Road, Mill Hill, London NW7 4LY:

"I would like to offer this comment on Michael Clift's fifth observation [*Newsletter* no. 10, p.12], in which he ponders on the amount of aloes and myrrh used at Jesus' burial. Taking the amount mentioned in the gospel according to John, we read of "about an hundred pound weight" (John 19: 39). This equates to a present-day measure of about seventy-two pounds. A very large amount indeed and it is difficult to envisage how Nicodemus would have conveyed this amount to the sepulchre without employing possibly an ass or cart to carry the load.

The idea that this amount of spice was used in the form of blocks or packs placed about the body thus allowing the linen to lay almost flat over Jesus' body has one serious fault. Peter and John on entering the empty tomb found only the linen pieces and nothing else. Had they known of the use of such a large amount of very costly spices in packs (and John was present at the burial), and not finding them in that empty sepulchre, would this not suggest to them that someone had entered the tomb, removed Jesus' body, and stolen the costly spices. No such thought occurred to them. John "saw and he believed".

Might we have here an incidence of error in early interpretation from the lost original Greek text? May it have been that the actual amount carried to the tomb by Nicodemus was not "an hundred pound weight" but "an hundred penny weight"? Still a costly and magnificent gift on the part of Nicodemus, but of a more practical amount than "an hundred pound weight". The comments of someone conversant with Greek textual criticism would be welcomed here to advise if such a mis-interpretation could have occurred.

R.T. Georges"