

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 213

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In this Issue:-

Page 1	Editorial	Sister Helen Brady
Page 2	Nazarene Fellowship Website Front Page	Compiled
Page 6	Further Comment on How Christ Died	Brother Allon Maxwell
Page 9	Editorial – May 1968	Brother Ernest Brady
Page 11	Thoughts on the B.A.S.F.	Brother Phil Parry
Page 13	Substitution	Brother Russell Gregory
Page 13	Last Four Verses of 1 Timothy 2	Brother A.H.Broughton
Page 16	Terrorists ‘R’ Us	Ziauddin Sardau

Editorial

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends,

Loving Greetings.

An article in a magazine made me once again acutely aware of how relevant and up to date the Bible really is, in particular the words and parables of Jesus even now at this late stage in history in the 21st century. Spirituality cannot be divorced from day to day living and the Bible would hardly use as illustrations of goodness things which were not good in themselves, such as thrift, contract and profit. It would condemn them.

At first glance wealth seems to be condemned, as a result of the often misquoted phrase “the love of money is the root of all evil.” But with careful reading this proves not to be so. In Psalms we are warned “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.” Proverbs warns against get-rich-quick schemes: “He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent” (28:20). The same book warns corner-cutting business men of their fate in a verse which also grasps the psychology of such people - their belief that they are too smart to fail: “He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him” (28:22).

There is no bias against wealth and wealth seeking as such: “He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich” (Proverbs 10:4). There is no advocacy of state ownership either. Even monarchs are not allowed to expropriate property. In 1 Kings 21, we read the horrible story of King Ahab who egged on by his wife Jezebel, allows Naboth to be stoned to death in order to get his hands on Naboth’s vineyard. God does not attach importance only to the murder; He causes Ahab to be asked, “Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?” Ezekiel 46: 18 rules: “The prince shall not take of the people’s inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession” - a passage upholding not just the right of property but the right of the property owner to decide who inherits it.

Christ and the New Testament share these beliefs, which should be unsurprising since Christ specifically says in Matthew 5:17 that He has come not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil them. But by His time, the land of the prophets is Roman-occupied. Nonetheless Christ believes that peace and order necessitate obedience to Roman law where it is just. Thus Roman taxes must be paid. The Pharisees try to trick Jesus into saying something subversive on that point: “Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” (Matthew 22:17). Christ tells them to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s - namely taxes. But He does not take the opportunity to advocate taxation as an instrument of redistribution.

In Matthew 25:14-30 we have what could be described as a defence of the investment market in the parable of the talents. Before going on a journey, a presumably rich man gives five talents to one servant, two to another, and one to a third. The one with five 'traded' with them, and made five more. The one with two similarly gained another two. "But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." On returning the rich man, hearing of the first two's wise investments, says to both in turn, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." But the third is admonished for sloth, and told - "thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers." The slothful servant is "cast into outer darkness."

In Matthew 20:1-16 we have the thought provoking parable concerning the hired servants and the vineyard owner who hires labourers for a penny a day. He hires some early in the morning. But, judging that more work could be done that day, he hires more later. Those hired early complain that those hired late are paid at the same rate. The vineyard owner asks: "Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" The parable is a defence of free contract. The early labourers received what they had contracted to receive. Their anger at what the others received is perhaps understandable, but the vineyard owner had the right to take account of changing economic circumstances, and correct his earlier judgment about how much labour he needed for that day. State regulators, or trade unions, would have insisted that the earlier workers be paid higher. But the vineyard would then have hired fewer next time, with unemployment as a possible result. It has been said that such parables had nothing to do with economics, and should not be taken literally. The biblical writers simply used everyday things, such as labour, talents and vineyards, to illustrate spiritual truths. For example, the parable of the talents was said to be about how God will judge us on the last day according to how we have used His gifts, which it undoubtedly is.

The phrase "first the natural then the spiritual" comes to mind here so it is more than likely that the parable, indeed all the parables are intended as lessons both for spiritual guidance and in the natural sphere, direction toward what is now called in the current jargon "best practice." We are part of the natural world and we are expected to operate in it to the best of our abilities, in line with true principles. We are also expected to live as spiritually motivated people in all our dealings and the parables give us practical advice on both these fronts.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

Love to all. Helen Brady.

I believe most readers will be aware that we have been working towards having our own web site on the Internet. This is taking a little longer than first expected but we are pleased to be able to give you a draft of what we hope to present as our 'Home Page.'

Following on from this introduction we plan to enlarge on our beliefs and giving the reasons for them. We acknowledge that this will not be an easy task as everyone has different background knowledge and reasons which satisfy one person may not satisfy another. From time to time we are sure to have the opportunity of discussing various points in these pages. Russell.

THE NAZARENE FELLOWSHIP HOME PAGE

INTRODUCTION

We are a small and widely scattered group who believe we have found the correct and detailed understanding of the Scriptures.

I. WHAT WE BELIEVE:

We believe that God is the creator and designer of the universe, and that He cares about the welfare of humankind.

We believe that God gave the Old Testament Scriptures to the Israelites through Moses and the Prophets and the New Testament Scriptures to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ and His Apostles.

We believe the Bible to be the only source of knowledge of God's will and purpose with the earth; of the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

We believe Jesus will return to set up His Kingdom on the earth to rule the world from Jerusalem.

We believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Saviour; miraculously conceived and born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem; He grew up in Nazareth, and at age 30 He began His ministry of preaching and healing.

He was executed by crucifixion by the highest religious authority, the Sanhedrin; and the highest civil authority, the Roman governor representing the Emperor. After the crucifixion He remained in the tomb until the third day when He was raised to eternal life in an incorruptible body.

We do not believe that Jesus existed before His conception and birth, or that He became God incarnate or that He is the second person of the so-called triune godhead. We reject emphatically the trinity doctrine, which was fabricated in the third century AD., and adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in the fourth century by a narrow margin of votes.

God's word existed in the beginning, then in the Apostle John's time God's Word was incarnate in the Jewish man Jesus, and the world beheld His glory. Though He was God's only-begotten Son, He did not have divine nature, but normal human nature during His earthly ministry.

We believe that the death of Jesus was a voluntary substitution for Adam and therefore for us as Adam's descendants. In other words Jesus voluntarily paid the penalty of inflicted death which passed upon Adam for eating the forbidden fruit, but which God remitted so that Adam could live out his life. This penalty/debt, in due time, would be paid by God's sinless Son. We do not believe that Jesus' death was a punishment inflicted on Him by God so that we might be forgiven: and we reject categorically that Jesus death was necessary for His own salvation.

We believe that baptism must be by total immersion when we come to a belief in Jesus, and have a desire to make a commitment to Him and His teachings. Baptism is a public declaration that we accept Jesus as our Saviour and as we go down into the water, it is a sign that we die to our old worldly way of life, and we emerge from the water to a new life in Jesus.

We believe that the committed Christian should be involved in prayer, bible study, righteous living, and witnessing wherever possible; always ready to give a reason for the hope within us.

We feel totally unable to concur with the theological concepts of popular churches, that we have immortal souls that after death go to a paradise in heaven beyond the skies; that there is a fiery hell where sinners will suffer eternal torment; that baptism is valid by sprinkling or pouring on babies or young children or unbelievers.

II. A SHORT LITTLE HISTORY.

Alexander Campbell was born in Antrim, Ireland in 1788 to a Presbyterian preacher. Alexander had the advantage of being taught at home by his father who was keen on education and an able teacher. At the earliest opportunity Alexander, whose ambition was "to be the best scholar in the country," went to the University of Glasgow where his earnest desire was to prepare himself for preaching the Gospel. Because his father was a Presbyterian Alexander became one too, though it was to be some years before he examined the Bible for himself and when he did he found that the will of God and his teachings were not being taught.

At the age of 19 he joined his father who had moved to America and they were both keen to free themselves from the restrictive teachings of the Presbyterian Church, and so, following the motto "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent," it was not long before they began

to doubt many of the religious theories to which they had adhered. The Bible was their guide and supreme authority and the practise of infant baptism was the first doctrine to be renounced.

Alexander found himself somewhat in accord with the Baptist Church and for seven years from 1823 to 1830 he published "The Christian Baptist." He used this magazine to try to correct some of the errors he saw in their teachings, but he eventually cut loose from the Baptists and sought out those who wanted to worship God in the liberty of Christ.

For Alexander the only Church was the one established by Christ and he called upon his followers to worship as the New Testament directs. Being convinced of the evils and inherent sinfulness of sectarianism, he contended that nothing should be bound upon Christians as a matter of doctrine which was not as old as the New Testament. His actions were condemned by the Baptist Church.

Dr. John Thomas was born in Hoxton Square in London in 1805 where he grew up and studied in medicine. In 1832 he emigrated to America and on reaching there the ship "ran ashore on Sable Island, and it was supposed she would be lost with all hands." Fearing the worst Dr Thomas vowed that if his life be spared he would seek the truth of Bible teaching.

Shortly afterwards he was introduced to a Mr Walter Scot, a Campbellite and was convinced by him of the need for baptism by immersion. In 1833 he met Alexander Campbell, who was impressed by the Thomas' knowledge of the Scriptures and was persuaded to speak upon several Bible topics. As a speaker of no mean ability Thomas found himself in demand preaching what he at that time believed to be the truth.

In 1843 Dr. Thomas began editing "The Apostolic Advocate." But the next year a rift developed between Alexander Campbell and Dr Thomas over the amount of knowledge needed before baptism, and the understanding that the faithful would be raised at the second coming of Christ. This rift was never healed.

Also in 1843, Thomas was introduced to William Miller, the leader of the Millerites. Miller predicted the Second Advent of Christ was imminent and that the millennial age would then commence. Dr. Thomas incorporated the doctrines of the close arrival of the Second Advent of Christ into his teachings. In 1846, when Dr. Thomas travelled to New York City he began a series of lectures and he based his speeches on thirty doctrinal points, which would later become part of his book *Elpis Israel* (The Hope of Israel).

John Thomas was rebaptised in 1847, and afterwards travelled to England in order to establish a community of followers there. When he returned to the United States once again, he moved his home base from Richmond to New York City. In 1854 Thomas' followers became known as "The Royal Association of Believers" based on the idea that the saints were the royal priesthood. This community was the first group of Dr. Thomas' followers to be independent of any existent congregation. The constitution of the group was reported in "The Herald of the Kingdom and the Age to Come."

We here give two paragraphs of interest from the Constitution:-

WHO ARE INVITED TO MEMBERSHIP?

The wisdom from above being first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy – we cordially invite all immersed believers of the gospel preached to Abraham, Israel, and the Gentiles, by the Angel of Jehovah, Moses, Jesus, and the apostles, who are disposed to illustrate this wisdom from above in word and deed, to unite with the undersigned for the purpose set forth in No.3.

WHO HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP WITHOUT MEMBERSHIP?

Being the Lord's Table, and not the table of the Association, all of good report within the city or without it, who, believing the gospel of the kingdom, have been immersed, are

cordially invited to worship with us; the only privileges withheld being a participation in the direction of our affairs, and speech without previous invitation.

In 1861 the Civil War broke out, and Thomas travelled to the South. During this time Robert Roberts emerged as the unofficial leader of the communities of followers in Great Britain. In 1864, the title "The Royal Association of Believers" was replaced with "Christadelphians." One of Dr. Thomas' beliefs was that Christians should not partake in war. "It was not just that to register as conscientious objectors required the loosely organized congregations to choose a name, but the war itself required believers to make a stand for what they believed." During the war he wrote "Eureka" (Greek *heurisko* = to find), a work of three volumes explaining Thomas' interpretation of the Apocalypse. The second volume was controversial in that he predicted Christ's return would be sometime between 1864 and 1868 and as a result of this concern some groups of followers departed.

On May 5th.1868. Thomas returned to England where he had greater success attracting followers. Birmingham became the centre of the Christadelphian movement in Great Britain, and the followers in this city were known as the Central Fellowship. Before Thomas' death, he made one final tour of the Christadelphian congregations in the United States. He died on March 5.1871 in Jersey City, and was buried in Brooklyn, NY.

Benjamin Wilson born in 1817 in Halifax in England, he belonged to the Baptist Church with his brothers Joseph, John and James. As a family they were not happy with the restrictions of their Church doctrines. In due time Benjamin went to America, met Dr Thomas and was baptised by him as a Christadelphian. Earlier, in 1857 Benjamin Wilson had set up business as a newspaper editor in Geneva, Illinois, U.S.A. and published the first section of The Emphatic Diaglott. This translation was completed by 1864 – an interlinear Greek-English translation of the New Testament. It was considered a great work of its time and was the first translation ever to render 1 John 5:7,8 correctly. The effect of this 'revelation' was electrifying for it came at a time when so many people were beginning to doubt the teaching of the Trinity and naturally rejoiced to find this verse spurious while the Trinitarians were angry.

However Benjamin Wilson did not stay with the Christadelphians but was instrumental in establishing other churches.

Robert Roberts was only nine years old the first time he heard Dr Thomas speak, and was a mere fourteen when he was baptized and joined the ranks of the Christadelphians in Scotland. Roberts became a newspaper reporter but found time to go around preaching and spreading the beliefs of the Christadelphians. When Roberts became the editor of The Christadelphian Magazine he was in the position to give direction and guidance to Christadelphia on both sides of the Atlantic. So when Dr. Thomas died Robert Roberts assumed "Peter's Chair" and enforced his views with little opposition amongst his friends; but he caused many to split away from the Christadelphian community especially in America, and those that remained were destined never to live peaceably together again and controversies arose which eventually led to divisions within Christadelphia. Robert Roberts was very assertive by nature and brooked no opposition, saying on one occasion, "We have passed the investigation stage." Add to this blinkered and dictatorial attitude, the formulation of the Statement of Faith, which in effect posthumously disfellowshipped Dr Thomas, we find that further growth and development of knowledge and understanding within the Christadelphian community was severely inhibited, which languished state continues to the present time. It has been said that Roberts is best known for starting the practice of "fraternal gatherings," the first of which took place in Birmingham, in 1872, and the idea quickly spread to North America.

Edward Turney was a Christadelphian and a business man in Nottingham. In 1873, two years after the death of Dr Thomas, Edward Turney and Robert Roberts fell out. Edward Turney was the editor of The Christadelphian Lamp. History has shown that Edward Turney followed on where Dr. Thomas left off by developing and rationalizing his beliefs with a better understanding of Scripture. For although Dr. Thomas had come a long way since he met Alexander Campbell, he seemed uncertain of his own beliefs and teachings over the years. He was challenged on one occasion for having changed his mind yet again, to which he wisely replied, "Must a man never progress. If he discover an error in his premises, must he for ever hold to it for the sake of consistency? May never such a calamity ever befall me. Rather let me change every day till I get it right, at last." Edward Turney is best known for his booklets, "The Sacrifice of Christ"

and “The Two Sons of God.” Both of which proved to be superior in exposition to anything previously written in understanding and explaining the Atonement.

Andrew Wilson, a nephew of Benjamin Wilson, and a road sweeper in Scotland. Andrew left the Christadelphians and wrote several short booklets in opposition to their doctrine of the Atonement, and his views echoed those of Edward Turney. He joined a group which the Christadelphians called the Renunciationists because they had renounced the Christadelphian doctrine of the Atonement.

Fred Pearce was a miner from South Wales, and a very prolific writer. He communicated his thoughts to the Renunciationists through the Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter, inviting correspondence and freely discussing Bible topics unhindered by sectarianism.

Ernest Brady, a business man from Birmingham and a Christadelphian from his youth. He continued to shew Christadelphian false doctrines more strongly than ever before through the medium of the Nazarene Circular Letter which, following the death of Fred Pearce, he edited for many years. Ernest Brady never tired of writing in opposition to Christadelphian teachings on the Atonement, Sin-in-the-flesh, God-manifestation, Mortal resurrection, Judgment and Baptism, and he produced a large number of booklets dealing with these and other controversies. The Nazarene Circular letter continues to this day with its main readership being among the Christadelphian community.

The common thread running through most of the people mentioned here is one of resolutely independent thinking in the face of all opposition; people who through prayer and Bible study refused to be tied to creeds of any kind and were always ready to change their views whenever a better way was seen. This continues to be the forte of the Nazarene Fellowship and so we print on all our literature:-

“The Nazarene Fellowship has no constitution, creed or statement of faith outside the pages of the Bible. It has reached its present understanding by reading and discussion of Scripture and study of any and every variety of opinion, past and present. If or when anyone feels that he can show that any point is in conflict with reason or revelation, we are glad to discuss it, for if we are wrong our chief aim is to get it right, but we do not attach much importance to tradition.”

We have many booklets available on our website and please feel free to download any you wish. We would point out, however, that none of these have been written for the website having been written over the past 130 years and in response to articles or letters which usually challenged our beliefs.

Hard copies are also available without cost subject to our ability to supply – our e-mail address is bygrace@nazarenes.org.uk

Russell Gregory

The following letter concerning the article “The Fatal Spear-thrust” was received from Allon Maxwell in response to recent comments on ‘How Christ Died’:-

Hello Russell,

Below follows a summary of my conclusions about Broughton’s book, “The Fatal Spear Thrust.” Some of it is a rehash of previous material, which was published in the Circular Letter No 211, which sparked John Stephenson’s comment that he was convinced that Broughton’s conclusions were correct. In the light of your announced intention to republish Broughton’s booklet, it seems relevant to shift the focus to deal only with that subject, so as to avoid any “medical side tracks” which might cloud the issues.

As you will see I remain unconvinced that the case for the extra words in Matthew 27:49, is proved beyond reasonable doubt. To me it seems much more plausible that the many versions which exclude them are much more likely to reflect the authentic text.

Whether or not you choose to publish it, I think it would be appropriated to remind your readers that there is a strong body of opinion which either rejects the extra words, or else maintains that their authenticity is an unresolved question:-

A SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE AGAINST THE INCLUSION OF “EXTRA WORDS” IN MATT 27:49

A.H. Broughton’s booklet, “The Fatal Spear Thrust”, presents as positive fact, a proposition which, even when viewed in the most favourable light, can never be regarded as “proved beyond reasonable doubt”.

His case revolves around the claim that some “extra words” are included in Matt 27:49, in certain older NT Greek manuscripts,

These words are:

“And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out came water and blood.”

ARE THESE WORDS AUTHENTIC?

It is true that these words are found in some older Greek and Latin manuscripts of the Alexandrine family. e.g. Vaticanus and Sinaiticus.

However Broughton has failed to emphasise that it is also a fact that they are NOT found in the *vast majority* of the several thousand Greek manuscripts which form the main body of evidence!

ARE VATICANUS AND SINAITICUS MORE RELIABLE?

These two manuscripts are certainly amongst the oldest known. Many claim that this makes them more reliable.

This is faulty logic!

How can mere age guarantee reliability? Of course it cannot! Reliability has to do with the accuracy of the source manuscripts from which Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were copied. If they were flawed, then so are their “descendants.” Further, how can we be absolutely positive that these “extra words” are not interpolations? Vaticanus and Sinaiticus belong to what is called the Alexandrian family of manuscripts. There are many significant differences between this group and the Byzantine manuscript “family,” which forms the basis of the “Textus Receptus.” Many scholars regard the Byzantine “family” as more reliable. It is an unresolved question. There is certainly no basis for insistence that Vaticanus and Sinaiticus provide evidence of “unreliability” of translations made from “*Textus Receptus*.”

As a matter of fact, we can’t even claim that those two older versions are identical. They are not! While they do both contain these words, there are many significant variations between the two. Not only that, experts tell us that *Vaticanus* has been overwritten, corrected, and amended in many places, by a later hand. It is reported that *Sinaiticus* is flawed by the replacement of several pages at some time after the original was produced. All of this raises obvious questions about the overall integrity of these two documents.

Compilers of the latest Greek texts seem to place a great deal of dependence on these two manuscripts. However on this point, the Westcott and Hort Greek texts have included the words in brackets, to indicate that there are doubts about their authenticity. Many modern English versions do take note of the words, but because of the problem with authenticity, do not include them in the main body of the English text. Instead they are mentioned only in a marginal note, without explanation of the problem.

Many respected scholars regard them as probably introduced from John 19:34 by an over zealous scribe, trying to “harmonise” the two gospels, but getting it wrong.

The pros and cons of authenticity, and reliability, would seem to be a topic far beyond the ability of the

average layman. When the experts differ, how does the layman presume to decide which of them is right? Even for experts, at this great distance in time, there is simply no way to prove it beyond doubt, one way or the other.

QUESTIONABLE GREEK

Broughton seriously mishandles the Greek in John 19:34, to claim that the translators of our English versions have got it wrong when they translate the Greek verb “*nusso*” as “pierced” instead of “had pierced.”

Not so! According to Greek grammars I have consulted, this word should usually be translated as a simple English past tense, i.e. “pierced.” The Grammars do indicate that it can sometimes be translated “had pierced.” However, this is not the usual way! And in John 19:34, it does not seem to fit the context at all.

It is therefore impossible to claim dogmatically that it must mean “had pierced.” In fact it seems much more likely that the simple past tense, “pierced,” is correct.

SHEDDING OF BLOOD

Broughton claims that death from the spear thrust would have been a necessary fulfilment of Old Testament types which required the shedding of blood of sacrifices for sin.

This is simply not true! Spears are not the only way to shed blood! And in the case of Jesus, there is plenty of evidence that Jesus must have experienced severe blood loss, caused by other means. The flogging by the Romans would have caused major blood loss. The flogging wounds would have been kept open by contact with the rough wood of the cross. All of this would have caused enough bloodshed to be a major factor in His death. Truly, with or without the spear, Jesus’ blood was shed for remission of our sins.

CONCLUSION

It is significant that the great majority of English versions exclude the “extra words” from the main text of Matt 27:49. Most that do take note of them, do so only via a marginal note, indicating that the translators consider them as a variation, less likely to represent the original text.

The weight of available evidence makes it impossible to decide, beyond question, that the “extra words” in Matt 27:49, are authentic.

In fact there is enough evidence to raise rather more than “reasonable doubt” about their genuineness.

It seems much more plausible to reckon that, in the majority of translations, John 19:34 has been correctly translated to indicate that Jesus was ALREADY dead, BEFORE that spear thrust from the Roman soldier. This would be in harmony with Matt 27:49, when it is read without the doubtful “extra words.”

Allon Maxwell

Editor’s note: I find this a very difficult subject to discuss due to its fundamental emotional nature; nevertheless I feel a few words here would be appropriate.

It is worth while remembering that there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood and only the sacrifice of Jesus was efficacious in taking away the sin of the world, and that through Him we have our day to day transgressions and sins forgiven. The point I am making is in regard to the shedding of blood in sacrifice. Yes, Jesus may well have lost some blood through the beating He received and from the wounds of the nails as well as from the crown of thorns, but some victims of crucifixion were known to last for several days before finally dying. Their loss of blood was minimal.

In all the animal sacrifices for sin it was the loss of blood which killed the animal in moments and I feel that for Jesus to be the Anti-type of these sacrifices He must have died when His blood was shed by the spear

thrust. Scripture does not clearly tell us this in so many words, but it must be so to fit the types. I don't see any other view is likely.

The other objection that has been raised is that we are told Jesus was already dead when the soldier pierced his side. But was He? The soldier couldn't be certain as some victims had been taken down when thought to be dead only to revive and the purpose of the spear thrust was to make certain that Jesus could not recover. Even though we read in our Authorised Version that Jesus was dead before the spear was thrust into His side, the soldier was not so sure or he would not have delivered the spear thrust.

Russell.

Once again we reproduce an editorial from the pen of our late Brother Ernest Brady. This is taken from the Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter dated :-

EDITORIAL - MAY 1968

Dear Brethren and Sisters, Loving greetings in Jesus Name and my apologies for the lengthening intervals between these letters. Recently I read in a Christadelphian Magazine an exposition of the Epistle to the Romans and found it so confused that I wrote to the author pointing out some of his self-contradictions, hoping to open his eyes to the truth. I might as well have saved myself the trouble, for although he replied courteously enough he rather added to his confusion than otherwise, giving answers to some questions I did not ask and ignoring some that I did.

He had written,

“Paul is not seeking here to unfold a complex metaphysic about ‘sin in the flesh’ and the legal figment of condemnation.”

I challenged this assertion that condemnation was a legal figment, (i.e. an invention which has no factual basis) and pointed out that a little later in his article he himself wrote

“the issue of one misdeed was condemnation for all men”

I pointed out that if it is true that Scripture says that one misdeed brought condemnation for all men then it is untrue to say that condemnation is a legal figment. You cannot have it both ways. If one misdeed brought condemnation then condemnation is a fact, not a legal fiction. His reply to this was that I had misunderstood him. He wrote,

“I did not mean that ‘condemnation’ was a legal figment but that ‘sin in the flesh’ was such.”

It is small wonder that Christadelphian readers are confused when Christadelphian writers make precise and categorical statements like the one I have quoted and when challenged tell you that you have misunderstood them; that they did not mean what they actually said, but the very reverse. If he did not mean that condemnation is a legal figment why did he say it was? If as he claims he was in fact referring to sin in the flesh, which is supposed to be physical he would scarcely have used the adjective legal which does not apply.

It is difficult to deal patiently with people who handle religion in this fashion. Anyone can make a slip and one would have expected an honest writer, caught in such a palpable contradiction to have admitted his mistake, not blamed his reader.

The second question referred to his assertion regarding the effect of the sin of Adam, “resulting in sin within every individual.”

I told him I assumed that he believed that our Lord was an individual of our race and asked him if he considered that there was in any sense sin within him. This seems to me again to be a flat contradiction - either Jesus had sin within himself like every member of the human race or every member of the human race has not sin within himself. He chose to ignore this question and replied,

“Sin is a mental state, and while chemical transmission (?) of Adam’s nature could give a predisposition to sin... the actual transmission of sin was through the environment. We learn to sin from the example of those around us, and as Paul says, it is because we have sinned that we are under condemnation.”

It is very certain that if there is a chemical transmission of Adam’s nature giving a predisposition to sin the example of those around us, good or bad, would matter little, but I am very sure that Paul says nothing of the kind. What he says is entirely different! “Death reigned even over them that had not sinned... judgment was by one to condemnation... by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” So clearly, it is NOT because we have sinned personally that we come under condemnation, but because judgment came upon all men to condemnation - and this before we were even born! We realise well enough that people find it difficult to see how this can be and how it is justifiable in the purpose of God, but that is no excuse for asserting that Paul was saying something entirely different.

The great truth which Paul is establishing is that in His supreme wisdom God has decreed that condemnation falls upon men irrespective of their personal sinfulness so that the guilt which would have been attributed to them had they been held responsible, may be as it were forestalled and they may be delivered from the bondage of sin by the purchase price of deliverance - the life paid down by Jesus. The fact that if it were to be judged individually we should all be found personally guilty justifies the dispensation whereby God in the Scripture “hath concluded all under (the) sin,” but if we are to be accurate, and where truth, Divine justice and life and death are concerned accuracy is very desirable, it is not because we are personally sinners that we find ourselves under condemnation but because we are all of the family and share the life of Adam. Only by recognising ourselves as in Adam and our hope of life lost for us by him when he sinned can we properly understand and appreciate how and why the sacrifice made by Jesus when He gave up His own life for the life of the sinner is able to save us . If the author had recognised this simple but profound truth he would not be concerned with fantasies like chemical transmission of Adam’s nature or predisposition to sin. But the great tragedy is that because of their conception of sin as a physical constituent of human flesh, or even as a mental state, Christadelphians cannot understand the atonement and, worse still, do not even believe in it as a true sacrifice.

Another point I challenged in his article was his rendering of Romans 5:12 as “Thus death pervaded the whole human race.”

I asked what was his authority for rendering the words “passed upon” which appear in the A.V. as “pervaded” and he replied that he was quoting the New English Bible. It is evident that since the responsibility came into human nature after The Fall, as a physical principle of decay they altered the sense of the words “passed upon” which would be appropriate to apply to a legal sentence and substituted the word “pervaded” which fitted their own conception - and Christadelphians - that sin resulted in a change of human nature from the very good of creation into the supposed very bad of its present state. It is because of this stupid and completely illogical and unscriptural misunderstanding that Christianity is despised today and God is regarded as responsible for all the wickedness and evil that fills the world. If He had caused human nature to be “pervaded” by death because Adam sinned or sin to be transmitted chemically He would indeed be responsible - He would be a monster of injustice and intelligent people can see this. If Christians had had any sense they would have sorted out the truth long ago - instead they have discredited themselves and their religion by defending the old threadbare fallacies which have lasted for centuries since the Church became a commercial enterprise more important than the things it taught.

We send our love and greetings to you all, looking forward to the great day when the whole earth shall be full of the Glory of the Lord.

In Jesus’ Name, Ernest Brady.

Some thoughts on the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith

Birmingham Temperance Hall Christadelphian Ecclesia: A Statement concerning the forming of their Basis of Fellowship, from the time Robert Roberts disagreed with Dr Thomas that Adam at Creation was corruptible and capable of dying.

Thirty Clauses were to be accepted on the basis of R.Roberts understanding in opposition to Dr Thomas 1869, making R.Roberts Clause V a doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and confirmed by him in the “Visible Hand of God.”

In 1869 both Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts were in agreement that Adam was a living soul of the dust, a natural body of life very good in kind and condition, whose nature was not changed as a result of transgression of God’s law, it was in fact Adam’s relationship with God that changed, demanding the infliction of death by the taking away of his life by the shedding of his blood (this is according to Scripture truth, but not as later taught by Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts who differed in their theoretical doctrine on the mode of the death penalty).

Adam’s existence in a natural body of life was contingent on his obedience to the law God had placed him under, said Robert Roberts. He then follows with the statement, “Adam broke this law and was adjudged unworthy of immortality and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken, a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being...”

What are people to understand when they read this Clause V? It is plain enough when it is agreed that Adam was created a natural body of life – a living soul as saith the Genesis record – immortality is not a part of the condition or contract relative to Divine Law in this case. For here we are faced with an untruth which implies that God defiled Adam in some way for breaking His law, whereas it was Adam’s conscience that was defiled through breaking God’s law; this makes a vast difference to what R.Roberts is setting out to do in Clause V with a list of scripture references that have no bearing on self-defiled conscience, but invoke the false doctrine of sin transmitted by Divine sentence into the physical flesh of Adam, and so into all his posterity. This is a false interpretation of Romans 7 verses 18 to 23, where Paul is speaking as unconverted to Christ and is impersonating a Jew under the mosaic Law in that position.

What a doctrine of ‘mixed grill’ to set before people! Some yet on a diet of milk and not fully skilled in the word of righteousness! The Apostle to the Hebrews says strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The good I find in Clause IV of the B.A.S.F. is that both Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts were fully in agreement on Adam being a living soul or natural body, very good in kind and condition, and given a law whereby the continuance of his natural life was contingent on obedience.

Then Clause V commences with a direct contradiction of the word of God in two statements, the first being unrelated to Clause IV as follows: “Adam broke this law and was adjudged unworthy of immortality (Clause IV puts it as “natural life” not “immortality”), the Divine sentence of inflicted death was therefore operative upon a man, a natural body of life already capable of death by decay if left to himself, and as God had first made him - (Dr Thomas). So this natural decay could not be the sentence of death by sin nor the fulfilment of Genesis 3:17-20, but a result and description of the side-effects due to the fact that the true Lamb of God foreshadowed in Eden, would not appear until the time appointed of God and for the purpose of redemption, it is the life-blood of Jesus, who came to ratify the Edenic Law and the Mosaic law that covers both Gentiles and Jews through faith.

On the basis of this Clause V and its contents, where is the need for any additional Clauses since all subject to it are consigned to oblivion? As stated, there is an unworthiness of immortality, a defilement of the nature, and a change of that nature to cause decay, death, and return to dust as a sinner with no setting aside of God’s just and necessary law of sin and death.

Where, I ask, can Clause VI come into it – “A plan of restoration and rescue from destruction” when all of Clause V has been transmitted to Adam’s posterity by physical means of reproduction? This is where the legal and moral teaching of Paul in his epistle to the Romans is completely lost by believing that this “just and necessary law of sin and death” to be a physical law of man’s nature. Did not Paul state in Romans 8:1-2 while still alive and able to write “For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”?

Who then was instrumental in the setting aside (for it had to be set aside) of this just and necessary law of sin and death? The law that gives our present life in Christ – that of being no more in the flesh but in the Spirit, through symbolic death (baptism) into the physical death Jesus suffered willingly as a sinless man, for us all, on condition of faith in His sacrificial death in place of Adam and all upon whom it passed by imputation, and not physical descent.

Thus Clause IX cancels Clause V as the penalty for sin, in that Jesus is said to have risen from the death required by the righteousness of God. This death Jesus suffered by the shedding of His blood not by natural decay and return to dust, for God did not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Thus proving that it was not the flesh which God condemned but the life in the blood of Adam that was in pledge to the law he had transgressed in Eden; a legal position which some people are unwilling to accept.

It is a legal arrangement we must accept in the matter of salvation. Placed in Eden’s garden Adam was under Divine Law to obey or disobey; the penalty being inflicted death – not left to himself to die as God made him, to die the death relative to his physical nature.

Please note - the death of Christ was not by natural decay. How could people of the Temperance Hall have been so blind when challenging the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul by quoting Genesis 2:7 – man created from the ground “a living soul.” Thus admitting that Adam when created was of a nature that would ultimately die if left to himself as God had made him. But Ezekiel 18:20 proves inflicted death to have been the sentence for sin upon Adam when he transgressed as a living soul, a soul that could be left to die by natural means or by the shedding of his blood as the will of God would decide.

So in effect the people who believe natural decay and death to be a physical law of man’s being for sin, not having been set aside in any way, must accept that baptism does nothing for them. They die what they believe to be the death similar to that which Adam experienced, so they cannot arise to newness of life as was the case with Paul who said he had been crucified with Christ, but was nevertheless was alive; a legal; and moral; position of Grace.

If any possess the Statement of Faith (Temperance Hall) then there is no need to go further than Clause VI to find from what I have written how blind Robert Roberts has caused people to be in making such erroneous teaching compulsive for salvation. Others in authority do the same and are unable to explain scripturally the meaning of the Clauses for themselves. Think seriously on these matters.

“All that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” The affirmative words of Jesus – John 6:37.

What greater assurance can we expect?

Sincere Love, Phil and Rene Parry.

A few weeks ago I saw correspondence in which the writer said that “Substitution is wrong in principle.” In reply I wrote the following:-

Substitution

Now the subject has been raised I want to put the record straight. We all believe in substitution! Yes, we do and you do. You would not be a Christian if you did not believe in and practice substitution. The second commandment to love thy neighbour as thy self depends on it. So it was taught in the Law of Moses. Jesus taught it on the Sermon on the Mount; the apostles taught it, and it is practical righteousness.

In Galatians 6:2 we read, “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” And there you have it in a nutshell. Bearing one another’s burdens is substitution. One bears the burdens of another instead of that other person having to bear them – in part if not in all.

Let’s take an example in the life of Paul and for this we turn to Philemon. Philemon was a disciple who lived in Colosse and his slave, Onesimus had fled to Rome having probably robbed his master first. While in Rome, Onesimus meets Paul and also becomes a disciple. Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter part of which reads, “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.” Whatever it was Onesimus owed to Philemon, Paul wanted to pay it instead. That is Substitution. Christianity at work. Practical righteousness.

Purchase is another form of substitution. We spend money for the things we wish to purchase, so instead of money in our pockets we have possessions in our homes.

And what did Jesus do? Did Jesus set us an example? Of course he did. Both in bearing our burdens and in purchasing us to himself. Acts 20:28, “take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” 1 Corinthians 7:23 – “ye are bought with a price; be not ye servants of men.” 1 Corinthians 6:20 – “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” So we are purchased by the blood of Christ. Indeed the parable of the treasure hid in a field is of Jesus spending all that He had to buy that field. Matthew 13:44.

Did Jesus bear our burdens? Galatians 3:13 – “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Can substitution be more clearly shown? Isaiah 53:6 – “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Jesus accepted the burden of our iniquities so that we didn’t have to suffer for them ourselves.

The substitution which is objected to and rightly so, is vicarious punishment where one person is punished in place of another. This cannot happen in Christianity. However, if one person dies in order to save another, he is then praised for his love, courage and bravery.

Let us thank God for Jesus and Jesus for His steadfast courage. Love to all, Russell.

THE LAST FOUR VERSES OF 1 TIMOTHY 2

“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence for Adam was first formed then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”

Few people have a proper understanding of these verses.

Paul’s writings were being distorted in his life time and letters were forged in his name. This malpractice would have continued after his death. In the succeeding three centuries of hand-copying,

between his death and the earliest of our manuscripts, opportunity was given for much alteration, addition to and subtraction from, his writings.

It is necessary, therefore, to be alert to the possibility of tampering with his writings, and whenever a thought or passage in the collection of Pauline writings contradicts divine principles or Scripture specifically or generally, that doubtful thought or passage should be left in abeyance.

The known teachings of the Old Testament or of the Lord in the Gospels should be held tenaciously, and the doubtful words left in abeyance. I repeat this, as the usual practice is to do just the reverse, that is, to place full confidence in what Paul was supposed to have written, and to distort the Scripture elsewhere to conform to that.

THE PRONOUN 'I.' The four verses in the AV commence with this pronoun, after the word 'but'. It is often assumed that what follows is a command of the Lord. In another place (1 Corinthians 7:12) - Paul is careful to distinguish between what he himself thought and what the Spirit taught. This pronoun 'I' tells us what was the wish of Paul Himself. We must not transfer this wish to the Spirit.

PAUL WAS NOT INFALIBLE. Even the prophet Nathan once gave wrong advice to David. Paul was also human and, like us, could make mistakes? and did.

On one occasion he submitted to the Law of Moses in paying for animal sacrifices in the Temple, although he taught that believers were dead to the Law. On another occasion he resisted the Spirit when he persisted in his determination to go to Jerusalem. At Tyre the disciples "kept telling (Aorist 2) Paul through the Spirit (*dia tou pneumatos*) not to set foot in Jerusalem." Acts 21.4 NASB.

If our four verses are indeed the writings of Paul, then we must accept what he said as being true, that he did in fact not permit women to teach. But this attitude of his we must fit into the general teaching of Scripture that God does use women to teach, and that the Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit did use women to teach in prophecy etc.

ONE OBJECTION HERE. It could be said here by someone that in those early days of Christianity the women were used in teaching because they had the Holy Spirit, but that in these days they do not have the Spirit in the ecclesias. If having the Spirit, then, is the qualification for speaking in ecclesia this debars men from speaking unless they also have the Spirit.

Let us accept the statement as true that Paul did indeed not permit a woman to teach etc. He had been a Jewish rabbi, and we can well understand his innate prejudice against women in the synagogue. (Peter's bias against Gentiles remained in him until Paul rebuked him). Of course, Paul at other times showed that in Christ both male and female are equal, and he co-operated with women in teaching, calling them 'fellow-workers in the Gospel,' that is, in teaching and preaching. But here in 1 Timothy 2 the old prejudice against women comes to the surface (if the verses were indeed written by Paul).

Now though we are told that Paul did not permit a "woman to teach, we are assured that God did in fact use women in teaching. What beautiful teachings there are in the songs of Hannah, Elizabeth, Mary and Deborah, for example.

It was a woman whom God used to teach a king. King Josiah could have sent to Jeremiah or to Habakkuk or to Zephaniah or to one of the 'prophets' mentioned in 2 Kings 23.2, but he sent to Huldah.

And it was a woman, Anna, who taught the people concerning the Messiah, and she taught the people in the Temple at Jerusalem.

And the lord chose a woman to teach His disciples what they should do, after that He was raised.

And what of Abigail who taught a maddened warrior to be patient, and in the recorded words of her speech teaches us also? The wife of Nabal was probably not speaking by the Spirit, but she certainly taught David - and millions since - wisdom. God used her.

Now, whether or not these four verses are the words of Paul, it is certain that there is no word in the Greek mss. for that word usurp in 1 Ti 2.12 - “nor to usurp authority”.

Here is the wording of the Nestle (Eberhard) text published by Bagster 1958 edition. It is also the text of Nestle (Erwin) and KILPATRICK, published in the BFBS Gr. NT edition of 1958, and also that of the ALAN, BLACK, METZGER and WIKGREN text published by the UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES 1966.

<i>didaskein de</i>	<i>gunaika</i>	<i>ouk epitrepO</i>	<i>oude authentein</i>	<i>andros</i>
to-teach	a-woman	I-do-not-permit	nor to exercise authority	of’ (over) a man

The earlier Greek texts of Stephens 1550, of BEZA 1598, the Elzevir 1633, of Griesbach 1775 and of Scholtz read thus -

<i>gunaiki de didaskein”</i>
a woman to teach

and after this slight variation of order of words the-texts follow as above.

It is then certain that there is no justification whatever for that word ‘usurp’ in the AV.

The AV alone of all the translations that I have looked at, has that word ‘usurp’ in 1 Timothy 2. I will not here site those translations: it would be unnecessarily tedious. I will give the main modern versions in the English language.

RV	have dominion	...	over a man
ASV	ditto	...	ditto
RSV	have authority	...	over men
NASB	exercise authority	...	over a man
Douay	use authority	...	over the man
YLT	rule	...	a husband .

Note A. The RSV is in error in using the word ‘men.’

Note B. The Douay was translated from Latin, which has no definite or indefinite article. Hence the word ‘the’ appears above, but wrongly.

It is, therefore, wrong to interject the word ‘usurp’ in those four verses. There is a world of difference between a king exercising authority and a pretender usurping authority.

Having proved that that word is spurious, and ought to be struck out of our Bibles, we will consider the word ‘husband’.

‘MAN’ ‘MEN’ or ‘HUSBAND’ ? Now if we are to follow the rule concerning women in these four verses, then no woman can have authority over a man. Her own husband is excluded here by the simple grammatical usage of words. It is a man who is not her husband over whom she must not exercise authority. So no woman must have a servant, or an employee. She must not occupy a place of authority such as chief clerk, or hospital matron or manage a hotel or other large business.

WILL WISH WANT. As I have written before, Paul in these four verses (if indeed they are his) is not giving the ruling of the Lord, but is stating his own wish.

MAN/HUSBAND WOMAN/WIFE. Perhaps it should be pointed out here that there is no separate word in Greek for ‘husband’ nor one for ‘wife’. The husband is indicated by the phrase “the man of her,” or sometimes by a composite word including the word for ‘man’,

ADAM WAS FIRST FORMED. This second of our four verses can surely not have been written by Paul, for he must have known that in the order of creation the more intelligent and the more refined creatures followed the coarser and less intelligent. Bulls were formed before man. Does that make man inferior to them?

Remember also that Eve was not created to be a servant to Adam but to be his counterpart and his equal. God gave to Adam (and also to Eve) dominion over the animal creation: He did not give Adam dominion over Eve.

THE THIRD OF THE VERSES. This third verse is also not logical. Who is the better fitted to teach? one who, like Eve, was first deceived and immediately or shortly thereafter discovered her mistake, or one who like Adam, was not deceived, and sinned openly?

Surely the former is more fitted to exhort us to righteous living than the Adam-type.

THE FOURTH OF THE VERSES. No one living is able to explain this verse.

CONCLUSION. The teaching in these four verses is seen to be erroneous when compared with Scriptural teaching and practice and the illogical reasoning, and the vague last verse all show that these four verses have been added to Paul's letter to Timothy, or are the mutilations of what he did actually write.

Brother A. H. Broughton.

Ziauddin Sardar writes:-

Terrorists 'R' Us

Most terrorists have mundane, apparently peaceful lives. They are you and me, ordinary people consuming much too much, leading an unsustainable lifestyle, committing cultural genocide on the vast majority of humanity, plundering non-western economies in the name of free trade, and imposing our lifestyle and morality on the rest of humanity, Yes, terrorists 'r' us!

Of course, there is a difference between 'their' terrorism and 'our' terrorism. They often have a legitimate grievance; they engage in conscious terrorism because they see themselves as powerless against powerful governments that have inflicted real injustice on them. We are motivated by greed, a sense of superiority and an unshakable belief in our right to dominate the world. They kill indiscriminately. We kill en masse. Their nefarious deeds get the attention of the global media. Our terrorist activities are invisible, shrouded in pious rhetoric about "freedom and democracy," embedded in our way of life, integrated into our system of thought and way of looking at the world. They know they are guilty. We have an innate belief in our innocence. They kill in hundreds and thousands; we kill in millions.

Of the 4.4 billion people living in the developing countries, nearly three fifths lack access to sewers, a third to clean water, a quarter to housing, and a fifth to health care of any kind. Every day 800 million people go hungry. A baby born today in Botswana has a life expectancy of 35 years.

This is not the product of some fluke of history, or natural disasters, or mismanagement by tin pot dictators or lack of initiative by the wretched of the Earth. These people are the direct victims of our consciously-planned policies and actions. We deny government aid and our markets to African peanut farmers but give billions of dollars in subsidies to American peanut farmers and ensure they can sell their products all over the globe. We subsidize every cow in the European Union by \$2.50 a day and force the vast majority of peasants in Africa and Asia off their land to live on less than \$1 a day,

We also kill cultures, destroy traditional communities in the name of development, turn rainforests into deserts to satisfy our craving for hamburgers. Ten languages fall silent every year. Entire cultures, lifestyles and different ways of being human are disappearing as a direct result of cultural terrorism we perpetuate.

In return, we gloat. America constitutes 3 percent of world's population but consumes 25 percent of its energy and produces 30 percent of its pollution. The three richest Americans have assets exceeding the combined gross domestic products of the 48 least-developed countries. Americans spend \$8 billion on cosmetics, almost as much on pet food, and \$10 billion a year on pornography - more than the estimated total needed to provide clean water, safe sewers and basic health care to the world's poor.

This, then, is the world that the West has created over the past two centuries and America has shaped during the last few decades. In this world, inequalities, exploitation and imperialism are not just part of the system - they are the System.

'Evil terrorists' perform horrendous acts of carnage by insulating their conscious awareness from the emotional consequences of what they do. We too insulate our consciousness from the repugnant consequences of what we continue to do every day of our mundane lives and the truly hideous world we have created and maintain. For sure, terrorists need to change. But we need to change even more.

The future need not be an extension of the past or the present. It can be shaped, decolonized and made more equitable and just. But to shape a future free from terrorism we must realize that the 'war on terror' is not a war at all. It is cultural politics. It is a struggle to create cultural space for other ways of knowing, being and doing. It is a politics of visibility that brings the inhuman consequences of our policies and action into sharper focus. It is personal exertion to live a more sustainable and humane life. It is an attempt to address the politics of identity that accompanies neo-liberal globalization. In the end, a terrorism-free future begins with ourselves.

Ziauddin Sardar is a British writer, broadcaster and cultural critic. His recent books include "Why Do People Hate America?" and "American Terminator: Myths, Movies and Global Power." (Disinformation Books).

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Sent in by Brother John Stevenson:-

Dear Russell, Here is a little item that might be suitable for a corner of the Circular Letter. It is taken from a Salvation Army Calendar, but I didn't like their translation of John 3:16 that they used, so I have substituted a more familiar one from the R.V. :-

"God so loved the World that He gave His only-begotten Son, so that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." In 1989, 96 fans were crushed to death in a soccer stadium in Sheffield, and another 200 were injured. At one of the hospitals where the victims were taken, an attending surgeon spoke to the parents who had come to find out the fate of their children. The surgeon read the names of those killed and expressed his sympathy. He said he believed that God understood the parents' grief and was with them in their time of need. One father bitterly responded "What does God know about losing a son?" Actually, as it turns out God does know everything about it.

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Seen in The Daily Telegraph:-

Concerning the Archbishop of Canterbury's recent obscure article following the tsunami, I am reminded of the comment a wise person made about a modern poet – "Although he tortured the English language, he has never yet forced it to reveal his meaning." – Helen Brady