

Shroud of Christ?

The documentary *Shroud of Christ?* was shown over Easter in both the UK and the USA. It was produced by Pioneer TV for Channel 4, and directed by Alex Hearle. I am including two different reviews of the film, one by Alan Smith, President of the International Awards for Liveable Communities, and also of the International Federation for Parks and Recreation Areas, based in Reading, England. The other review is by BSTS member Denis Mannix.

To my own mind, too much attention was paid to Nicholas Allen's medieval photograph theory. Of course, if a Shroud documentary is to be balanced, then there must be something arguing against authenticity. The problem is that no matter what other reasons people might have for doubting that the Shroud is genuinely Christ's burial cloth, explanations for image formation quite simply cannot be used. To quote Barrie Schwartz (whose comments about Allen's theory were filmed but edited out of the documentary), "My only additional comment on Allen's work is the one I make to everyone who presents me with their mechanism for the image on the Shroud: It must match ALL of the physical AND chemical properties of the Shroud image and take into account all of the known data about the Shroud. Anything less is just not acceptable. To date, no one has ever done it".

Despite the need for a balanced and open approach, Allen's theory is quite simply scientifically impossible as an explanation for the Shroud's origin, no matter what one may or may not believe about the cloth. For a fully detailed discussion as to why this is so, those who have Internet can see <http://www.shroud.com/pdfs/orvieto.pdf>.

Shroud of Christ?

A Review by Alan Smith

(Editor's Note: Mr. Smith is President of the International Awards for Liveable Communities and also of the International Federation for Parks and Recreation Areas).

The authenticity of the Shroud remains one of the World's greatest debates, and Channel 4's *Shroud of Christ?* brought many of the main arguments together, although there was a bias in favour of the 'yes' vote. Until more scientific tests are carried out to verify the

age of the Shroud, many of the arguments presented in the programme, both for and against, are destined to be circumstantial.

The contribution of Fred Guzibe, Forensic Pathologist, was graphic, but assumed that bloodstains were caused by the Crown of Thorns rather than testing this assumption. Likewise, it was tempting to accept that a style of stitching in the Shroud that had existed in the 1st Century, is proof of authenticity... it is not.

Evidence based on the consequences of how the Shroud may have been folded and stored was fascinating but proved little, and a suggestion that a 1st Century artist 'may have seen the Shroud' and then copied a point of detail into a painting was less convincing. There were two contributions, one for and one against, that provided the most compelling evidence.

Dr. Nicholas Allen, Art Historian, had created a photographic image using a 13th century technique that involved soaking a cloth in silver sulphate. His evidence was convincing and his plea for tests on the Shroud to establish the presence, or not, of silver sulphate appeared justified.

Mark Guscin's painstaking and meticulous research provided the most compelling 'yes' vote. His tracing of a bloodstained sudarium from Jerusalem to Arab Spain was made the more compelling with the claimed proof of stains of identical rare blood groups on both the Shroud and the Sudarium. Unfortunately, no evidence was offered as to whether the two sets of bloodstains were of the same age.

Watching with an open, but slightly sceptical, view, 'Shroud of Christ?' left a desire to believe, but until the Authorities commission further carbon dating tests to verify the age of the cloth and more tests on the similarity and age of the blood stains, all the theories and conjecture of how the image of Christ might or might not have been created amount to little. As long as the Authorities reject the call for further tests, excellent and informative programmes such as 'Shroud of Christ?' can go no further, and one must question the reluctance of the Authorities.

Alan Smith

SHROUD OF CHRIST

From the TV Series “Secrets of the Dead”

A Review by R.D. Mannix

After a brief historical overview of the Shroud studies Ian Wilson, the Programme Consultant, informed us that there were last minute disagreements about the site of the sample for the carbon dating in 1988. We were not told what the factors in the disagreement were nor who was responsible for the final choice but it now appears that the sample was not representative of the main body of the Shroud.

Barry Schwartz, one of the original STURP team stated that the radio-carbon sample area had been of little interest to them in 1978 since it was the nature of the image that they were investigating. They showed that there is no trace of artists' pigment on the cloth and the image must arise from some other mechanism. Fortunately their records also include uv fluorescence-photos of the complete Shroud and these show that the sample area chosen for the dating is quite different from the main linen. This difference may have no significance for the dating and could simply be a result of repeated handling and contamination at this spot with a consequent quenching or obscuring of the fluorescence. Unfortunately it does make the sampling unsafe. It appears that no-one consulted STURP about the suitability of this corner-edge sample site.

Mechtild Flury Lemberg is the textile expert responsible for the recent restoration of the Shroud, including the replacement of the burn patches. She spoke about the need to store the Shroud in an inert Argon atmosphere to halt the darkening of the linen that is causing the body image to be less discernible. During her restoration work, Mme Lemberg has found on the Shroud some unusual stitching which she describes as a “seam”. This must be some mis-translation since in English a “seam” is the stitching which holds together two separate pieces of material. Significantly this stitching is of a type seen previously only on clothes from Massada dated approx. 70AD.

Fred Zugibe, a forensic pathologist, has no doubts that the image is that of a real man. He gave a graphic account of the injuries and the agonies of the man of the Shroud which the professional eye can discern quite clearly.

Nicholas Allen, an art historian, showed how the image could have been produced by rudimentary photography. This would require a suitable corpse, a camera oscura with a crystal lens, and a cloth soaked in a solution of a silver salt that would release the silver to form the image. He demonstrated the production of a realistic Shroud-like image from a dummy corpse with this technique. There was no explanation why such a breathtaking technological advance into photography was apparently abandoned without any further applications. Allen claims that the discovery of metallic silver on the Shroud would confirm his theory. He has overlooked the fact that the Shroud was burned with molten silver in the Chambery fire.

The drawing in the Pray document from Budapest, circa 1190 is clearly a representation of the present Shroud as evidenced by the image without thumbs and by the distinctive Poker Holes. The Shroud was evidently an item of reverence some 70 years before the earliest date given by the radio carbon dating. Unfortunately we were not told what object the artist himself was depicting. If it was the Cloth of Constantinople that had been his subject then we immediately have a provenance for the Shroud back to at least the discovery in Edessa in 525AD. Is there no accompanying text in the Pray document that can clarify this point?

For the Shroud enthusiasts, the Sudarium of Oviedo is an unbelievable gift. Marc Guscini, an historian and expert in ancient languages, explained its recorded provenance back at least to its arrival in Spain in the 600's and its earlier sighting by pilgrims in Jerusalem. Throughout its recorded history it has been held as a most holy relic of the passion of Jesus. It is a cheap sweat cloth covered in dried blood and pleural oedema. Scientific examination shows that it has been held around the face of a vertical, dying person to cover the face and to catch the effluent from the nose and mouth. The rare blood grouping, AB, found in only 3% of people matches that on the Shroud. Guscini explained that there is a very high correspondence between the bloodstains at the back of the head on the Sudarium and those on the Shroud at the same location, so much so that they have clearly come from the same body. The Sudarium certainly appears to be the "cloth that was around the head" as described in St John's gospel. These two cloths, completely un-associated with each other until the 1980's, must be the most powerful evidence for each other's authenticity.

Stephen Mattingly, Prof. of Microbiology, believes that the Shroud image arises from direct contact with a tortured body covered in micro-organisms and the sticky polymer that they produce. A live demonstration showed how an image can be formed on a face cloth after an initial swabbing of the face with suitable bacteria. This explanation of the image fitted very well with the visual close-ups of the Shroud shown by Mechtild Flury Lemberg. Surprisingly, it did appear that the discolouration which produces the image is on only those parts of the surface of the fibres that would have been in direct contact with the body. There was no sight of the less intense discoloration that gives the 3-D information.

Mattingly also believes that the levels of polymer produced by the micro-organisms on the Shroud are sufficiently high to have affected the radio-carbon dating to some extent making the cloth appear younger.

Aldo Guerreschi showed that the water stains on the Shroud, which have long been presumed to arise from the dowsing with water at the Chambery fire, have a quite different origin. For this pattern of stains to form the cloth must have been folded in a concertina fashion, unlike the folding during the fire, and stored with one corner or edge subject to wetting. Storage in a jar where condensation was occurring was given as a possible explanation. Do we know whether the cloth was stored in such a container within the walls at Edessa?.

In addition to the accounts of the recent work on the Shroud, the TV programme also gave us some wonderful visible treats. The close-ups and the magnifications showed the surface structure with the stained fibrils, the Shroud with the patches removed, the site and the actual cutting of the sample for radio-carbon dating and the way the Sudarium was used.

R.D.Mannix. April 2004

INTERVIEW WITH ALEX HEARLE

As I explained in the Editorial, while in Greece I interviewed Alex Hearle, director of the Shroud documentary recently shown on Channel 4 in the UK, and on Thirteen / WNET in the United States. I think the piece is best left in interview format. I personally find some of Alex's comments about Shroud politics quite revealing and thought provoking.

Had you heard about the Shroud before you directed this documentary?

Yes, of course. The connection was actually through Tomorrow's World (a television programme in the UK). I was on a trip to South Africa to make a number of films in 1995 and one of them involved Nicholas Allen with the statue and camera obscura. It was a short film but it hit the news. This was my first real contact with the Shroud of Turin. I thought it was medieval after the C14 dating carried out in 1988.

After six months "living with the Shroud", what are your thoughts on the matter now?

I have spoken to various people, including you and Mechthild. I have also spoken to people who don't believe the Shroud is authentic. I am convinced it is *definitely* older than 1260, just from the little research I have done myself. Is it first century? I am undecided. If I had to put a date on it, I would quite happily accept that it is sixth or seventh century, because of the Sudarium of Oviedo. The coincidences are too much of an outside chance to be an accident. The big leap is to the first century. Science has to break ground here – we need a scientific explanation to take it back to the first century. Whether there is more is an open question. I have yet to be convinced.

What were your intentions with the documentary?

While I was making the documentary I started reading about the Shroud, especially Ian Wilson's book *The Blood and the Shroud*, which is very complete and objective. My gut reaction is that if I find something interesting, others will too. I'm not an expert on the Shroud and this film is for a general audience. We had a two-hour meeting with Channel 4 about content, and the commissions editor didn't have too much to say. I don't want to provide a definitive answer – I want to present the facts and let the audience make their own minds up.

Everybody I have spoken to seems interested. I find the science interesting, although the backbone of the programme is a mixture of science and history with an ultimate aim of taking the Shroud back from 1260 to the first century. There are so many interesting things to say about the Shroud and there are two possible responses – interest, or it's a fake. My intention is to recreate the spark of interest.

What is the main problem you have come up against?

I have to say that I've had an extraordinary amount of bad luck. Freak weather in Northern Greece, and the day before filming Mechthild she fell in the street in Turin and broke her arm. She ended up in hospital. It took much longer than expected to get access to film in the cathedral in Turin, but we got there. All this means an increase in production time; it takes longer to film everything. We still have to do the Secondo Pia scene – I know it's been done before, but 1898 was such a turning point that it has to be done again. The Shroud was seen in a different way, all the hidden information that was revealed. The image is much more detailed and the whole field of forensics was opened up. Enormous amounts of information came out of the image and we were able to get an accurate description of what the body on the Shroud went through. All this came from 1898 and Pia. It was a major breakthrough.

And the worst thing about the whole experience?

Politics. Everybody, all the Shroud experts, have their own theory and try to make it known. They are quite critical of each other's theories. There should be a healthy debate, but it should never get personal. It should be kept scientific and historical. Politics could have a negative effect on pushing more work forward. What kind of image does all this give? If I were Cardinal of Turin, hearing all these backbiting remarks and seeing all the infighting, it would influence me. Maybe it could contribute to delays in future work. I don't know, it might not be true, but it could be taken that way. The important thing is more knowledge about the cloth – regardless of whether you think it's genuine or a fake, my personal view, somebody outside looking in, is that it deserves more than this.

What is your next project?

A film for National Geographic, about a journey from the surface of the earth to the planet's core, to see if we can learn anything from what we see, what is 6,000 miles under. It's a film about the make-up of the planet.