

2nd CES Convention – Valencia, Spain

Andrés Brito

“The image on the Shroud is one of a corpse that had been dead for four to six hours”. Such was the precision offered by Dr. José-Delfín Villalain, Professor of Forensic Medicine and Vice- President of the Centro Español de Sindonología investigation Team, in his presentation in front of around 200 people at the 2nd CES Convention in the city of Valencia.

Entitled “The Shroud today”, the convention took place from 29 April to 1 May, and joined together some of the world’s leading experts. Among them were Bruno Barberis, a mathematician from the University of Turin and director of the Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia; Emmanuel Carreira, physics lecturer at the John Carroll University in Cleveland; and John Jackson, director of the STURP team that carried out the investigation in 1978.

Dr. Villalain analysed the bone images visible on the Shroud first observed by Drs. Alan Whanger and Carter. He showed how not only are teeth or ribs visible, but also the heart, intestines and lungs, as well as some muscles (in the knees, for example, they can be clearly seen) Delfin Villalain stated that the image is “autoradiographic” and shows the inside of the body just as if it had been subject to nuclear magnetic resonance. You can even see the marrow, displaced by the body’s position on the cross. If Jesus died at around three o’clock in the afternoon as in the gospel account, then whatever produced the image did so between half past seven and nine o’clock on the same Friday night. Dr. Villalain spoke about the consequences of this, such as for example exactly what “resurrection” means, or if the process that caused the image should be related to resurrection or not.

Bruno Barberis gave a summary of the Shroud’s recent history. Over the years 1992 to 2002 there were two expositions, the Shroud was exposed to another fire, the new Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia centre was opened and Pope John Paul venerated the cloth when he was in Turin. Barberis also confessed that when the Guarini chapel caught fire, on the night of the 11 to 12 April 1997, they were more concerned about water damage than actual fire damage. Since 1992 the Conservation Committee had been very precise about how to protect the cloth – in a capsule, unfolded and horizontal, and completely free from accessories (cloths or cloth strips). The President of the Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia also spoke about the restoration work carried out in July 2002, pointing out that the “problem is not how to conserve the cloth but rather how to maintain the image visible given that the background is becoming darker and darker”.

Emmanuel Carreira summarised Dr. Ray Rogers’ work about the possibility of the carbon 14 sample being a different cloth from the main Shroud. Rogers compared fibres from 32 different areas of the Shroud with those from the carbon 14 sample and saw that their chemical composition was quite different. Jorge Manuel Rodríguez, President of the Centro Español de Sindonología, spoke about 100 years of scientific investigation on the Shroud and highlighted the fact that the carbon 14 results have led to a healthy self-criticism about Shroud studies.

Dr. John Jackson had intended to speak about image formation, but in the end he focused on arguing against Ray Rogers’ theory about the incoherence of the carbon 14 dating results. According to Jackson, the chemical differences noted by Rogers can also be appreciated in other areas of the Shroud, and they are not sufficient to alter the carbon 14 dating.

Finally, Andrés Brito, a qualified theologian and CES Canary Islands delegate (Andrés is well known for singing his islands' praises), explained that he is writing his PhD about the Shroud in the mass media in Spain. He produced some of the more extravagant articles and pointed out the most frequent mistakes made by reporters when writing about the Shroud.