

Editorial – The Shroud in the Year 2000

At a Press Conference on 22nd May the new Archbishop of Turin, Severino Poletto, imparted new information concerning this year's impending expositions of the Shroud, following as they do so hard on the heels of those of 1998. Apparently a few years back the Archbishop's predecessor Cardinal Saldarini sought Pope John Paul II's advice as the Shroud's legal owner. He wanted to know whether the Pope wished the Shroud to be brought out in 1998, for the 100th anniversary of the discovery of the Shroud's hidden negative. Or whether he would prefer the Jubilee year of 2000. To Cardinal Saldarini's astonishment the Pope said that he wanted the Shroud exhibited on both occasions. The result was that nearly 3 million made the journey to Turin to view the Shroud in 1998 - one of that number being the Pope himself - and similar numbers are expected this Jubilee year.

Thus, while Britain declined the inclusion of any representation of the Shroud in its now so plagued millennium Dome, and our Treasurer Reggie Norton continues to suffer rejection of his Shroud exhibit project on the part of English churches, cathedrals and stately homes, the plans for this year's showing of the Shroud itself in Turin's 'Duomo' (the local name for Turin Cathedral) are in good shape. The starting date has actually been brought forward to August 12 to allow more visitors to see it. And the event promises to be a most worthy element in the Roman Catholic Church's Jubilee celebrations of the 2000th anniversary of Jesus' birth.

In fact this 2000 year has already Shroud-wise been a particularly moving and memorable one for me personally. Quite unexpectedly, in March, and for only the second time in my life I had the privilege of viewing the cloth in real close-up – that is, from a distance of inches rather than yards, and without any protective glass. This was associated with my having been specially invited to Turin, as one of just twenty non-Italian invitees, for a Symposium to deliberate on what should happen next on the Shroud research-wise, and a large section of this Newsletter has been devoted to a detailed account of the proceedings.

As it happened, one of my fellow non-Italian invitees to the Symposium was Dr. Alan Adler, to whom I probably owed my inclusion, yet with whom I argued quite stormily both during and outside the meeting proper. Thankfully these differences did not dent either of us humour or camaraderie-wise, our correspondences continuing amicably, so it was with the greatest shock and sadness that I received news, just 24 hours before this Newsletter going to press, that Alan had died overnight in his sleep the weekend of June 10-11.

As will be clear from Alan's obituary, published on p.37, his passing represents a huge loss to the Shroudie world. Not only was he one of its scientific 'giants', this stature was such that he, more than any other English-speaking world specialist, had the ear of the Shroud's custodians in Turin. And not least, like the man of the Shroud himself, he was born a Jew, one of a very precious few amongst the Shroud's researchers, the others being Barrie Schwartz, Avinoam Danin and Rebecca Jackson.

All reminding us that life, like the Shroud itself (the conservation of which Alan Adler held particularly dear), is exquisitely fragile. And that that which binds us

together is infinitely more to be cherished than whatever differences may keep us apart...