

BOOK REVIEW

The Shroud of Christ – Its provenance and the revelations of the blessed Anne Catherine Emerich

By Joseph M. Derham

Reviewed by Mark Guscini

In BSTS 61 Joseph Derham wrote an article about the revelations to the Blessed Anne Catherine Emerich and their relationship to the Shroud of Turin. He has now published a short but very well presented book about the matter (Wynkin deWorde Ltd, Galway, Ireland, 2006).

The book basically follows the same thread as the article published, i.e. if we give credence to the revelations of Anne Catherine, then the Shroud preserved today in Turin is not the original burial cloth of Christ, but rather “one of the miraculous replications granted to the Order of the Knights Templar sometime in the later half of the 12th century”.

Curiously enough, Joseph Derham does equate Christ’s burial cloth with the Image of Edessa (the Mandyllion), at the same time denying any relationship of the Image with the Turin Shroud (by a process of logical elimination). The main reason given for not being able to equate the Shroud of Turin with the cloth described by Anne Catherine is that the mystic supposedly mentions a positive image, and as is well-known since 1898, the Shroud image contains negative properties. However, given that she died in 1824, she could hardly have distinguished between the photographic terms “positive” and “negative”, even if she had been interested in so doing.

Derham also points out that at the painted church of the Annunciation in Moldovita (Romania), there is a scene representing the siege of Constantinople in 1453, and in this scene the Image of Edessa, the Mandyllion, is clearly visible being held from the walls to defend the city from the Turks. If this were so, then it would indeed suggest that at least according to this source the Mandyllion was still in Constantinople in 1453, and had not

been taken to France after the sack of the city during the fourth Crusade in 1204. However, it is generally acknowledged that the painting combines scenes of the siege of Constantinople from 1453 with others referring to a previous such attempt made by the Persians. The Persians indeed made two such attempts on the city of Edessa, half way through the sixth century and again early in the seventh century, and the representation of the Image of Edessa surely refers to this occasion, when it is known to have been used in the city's defence.

I am quite sure that Anne Catherine's revelations have their own intrinsic spiritual worth, but my own opinion is that they cannot be taken as a historical document in reference to the Shroud. I think this is a very clear case of having to differentiate between what is purely religious and what is history and science. A mystic's revelation is not sufficient to disprove scientific work and history.

This said, Anne Catherine Emerich and the revelations she expressed form without doubt part of the larger scope of Shroud history, and a book explaining exactly what she said and what its possible interpretations could be and what they could mean is a welcome addition to the extensive list of books about the Shroud of Turin.

BOOK REVIEW

The Shroud Was The Resurrection The Body Theft, the Shroud in the Tomb and the Image that inspired a Myth

By John Loken, published by Falcon Books, 2006.

Reviewed by Mark Guscini

The aim of this new book is quite clear from the title – there was no physical resurrection of Christ, and what made the disciples believe in a physical resurrection was nothing less than the image on the Shroud. The body was not in the tomb because some time after the burial but before the visit to the tomb on the Sunday morning the (Jewish)

authorities stole the dead body of Christ, fearful that the tomb would become a rallying place for his followers. They either threw the body into a common grave or otherwise disposed of it.

Before actually taking a look at the book itself, a word about Shroud book reviews in general, inspired by the author's somewhat annoying habit of adding a kind of "warning tag" to the name of anyone who just might believe in a physical resurrection (Loken is not alone in this habit, in other books it is used for people who just might believe that the Shroud is genuine). Examples are when my own point of view is described as "conservative Catholic", I am a "devout Catholic", Mark Antonacci is "like Iannone, a Catholic Christian", Janice Bennet is led astray by "her own Catholic faith", etc etc. What exactly is Loken warning against? Is he suggesting that a person's beliefs automatically disqualify them from serious investigation? As has been pointed out so many times (although not many people seem to take notice), this is a two-sided coin – Loken and many others are just as susceptible to being influenced by their own agnosticism or atheism, which means that I could do the same and every time I mention the author's name add a "warning tag", such as "a convinced atheist" or "a devout agnostic".

Incidentally, Loken's conclusions about my "devout Catholicism" are drawn from my first book "The Oviedo Cloth" (1998). In a different review of the same book, we can read the following; "it is marred by prejudicial statements against the doctrine and piety of the Roman Catholic Church, precisely the Church whose doctrine and piety has been and continues to be responsible for preserving the relics which have so engaged the author's interest and aroused his defense!", showing that no matter what one's intentions are, all kinds of conclusions are possible.

When someone who does believe in the Shroud's authenticity reviews a Shroud book (and this particular book is in favour of authenticity), any kind of criticism is usually

attributed to the blinding influence of Christian faith. In other words, if I criticise this book because its conclusions might not be in accordance with my own, the author will probably just assume that I am not being reasonable, I have been blinded by my own beliefs.

The truth of the matter is that there are anti-authenticity books that I personally think are excellent (e.g. Harry Gove's book, *Relic, Icon or Hoax?*), and unfortunately numerous (too many, actually) pro-authenticity books that are hardly readable (better not to give any examples here ...). It depends on the book, on how the arguments are developed and expressed, what proof is brought forward in favour of a certain standpoint etc, in short, if the book is a good read or not. There is nothing like a good anti-authenticity book to challenge belief in the Shroud and make you think some things through, but a bad book is a bad book no matter what its point of view.

And so back to the book under review. The two main arguments involved, i.e. that the authorities stole the body of Jesus of Nazareth to avoid the tomb becoming a meeting place, and that the image on the Shroud somehow caused the disciples to believe in a physical resurrection, to my mind just do not hold water. Why would the authorities steal a dead body when to all effects and purposes Jesus had come to an end? And why would anybody believe in a physical resurrection from the dead just because they saw an image on the burial cloth? Loken's response to this second question becomes quite surreal at points, stating that "the cloth was also an appealing white color and thus a fit background for the golden yellow image of Jesus. The clean white cloth would have been perceived as cloudlike and heavenly". The Shroud standing upright was confused in the appearances in the upper room with a physical body, possibly due to a breeze making it move.

Going back to what I said previously – there are some very good books that argue against a physical resurrection (e.g. *Credo* by Hans Kung), but this, to my mind at least, is not one of them. It is further marred by little inaccuracies, such as stating that the fourth

gospel's account of the empty tomb is an eyewitness account except when Loken has to contradict "devout Catholics" who have said the same, in which case the account is not written by an eyewitness at all. The author also apologises for not reproducing photographs of the Sudarium of Oviedo, as a colleague informed him that the Spanish Centre for Sindonology "is somewhat wary of giving such permission". I wonder if Loken took the time to request permission in Spanish. Many people have requested permission through me and it is ALWAYS given free of charge as long as recognised in the publication.

There are many Christians who prefer to think of the resurrection as a spiritual rather than literal and physical event, yet to state that the Shroud image was the cause of a belief in a physical resurrection just makes no sense.

BOOK REVIEW

The Shroud Story

By Brendan Whiting

(2006, Harbour Publishing, English text, 424 pages, hardcover, includes colour and b&w photographs. ISBN: 0 646 45725 X).

Currently available through the book's website, www.shroud.com.au

Reviewed by Joanna Emery

In his latest work, *The Shroud Story*, Australian author Brendan Whiting explains that the inspiration to write the book came to him while staying at a peaceful retreat on Jamberoo Mountain in New South Wales. He had just finished reading *Verdict on the Shroud*, (the 1981 book by Kenneth Stevenson and Gary Habermas) and describes having 'a strange impulse to write the entire story of the Shroud, including science's most recent discoveries about this ancient cloth'.

It is not the first time someone has felt compelled to creative action after being introduced to the Shroud and there is undoubtedly a constant need for Shroud books which incorporate the most up-to-date information. Besides compiling a comprehensive presentation of Shroud history and science, Whiting's motivation for writing his book includes the assertion that recent scientific tests prove that the C14 dating results were not valid and that the mainstream media has ignored this fact.

A quick internet search on *The Shroud Story* shows that it is already receiving that media attention, at least on several Catholic sites. The book was launched in September, 2006 in the New South Wales State Parliament house where the Minister of Commerce, John Della Bosca, described it as a "very balanced, very thoughtful and very spiritual presentation of what are critical scholarly issues". Whiting took four years to write *The Shroud Story* and in the process consulted a number of well-known researchers including Rex Morgan, Ian Wilson, Barrie Schwartz, Alan Whanger and others. He also attended the International Symposium in Dallas in 2005.

After a narrative prologue surrounding the Passion (with details from visionary accounts, such as those of Maria Valtorta), the first part of the book, 'The Known Story' documents the history of the Shroud up to the year 1999. The second part, 'Evidential Early History' includes the Image of Edessa, the Mandylion, the Crusades and other features leading up to the year 1357. The final part, 'The Latest Light – 2000-2005' covers, among other topics, the Sudarium, the Holy Grail, the 2002 Restoration, the 2005 scientific announcements and a concluding chapter titled, 'Can the Resurrection be Scientifically Explained?'. Although the material does seem to jump from one time period to another, Whiting manages to walk the reader through almost every aspect of Shroud material available and keep it in concise, easily understood sections.

Whiting is no first-time author and obviously talented at his craft. His other books include *Ship of Courage* (the story of HMAS Perth and her crew) and *Victims of Tyranny* (the story of the Fitzgerald convict brothers). *The Shroud Story* is highly readable and facts are clearly presented (although one reader from the internet Shroud Science Group has since pointed out that Whiting uses the term ‘crucifragium’ in places to describe the ‘breaking of the legs’ wherein the word ‘crurifragium’ would have been more accurate). I will leave it up to seasoned sindonologists to comment on the fine points of Whiting’s work but it seems that the author’s intentions lie with a more general audience. No doubt inspired by his own faith—as evident through the epilogue which touchingly recalls a visit to Turin’s Shroud Chapel even though the author knew he wouldn’t be able to actually view the Shroud itself—Whiting provides the Shroud newcomer with a compelling story, one that motivates to dig deeper and perhaps even undertake a quest of his or her own. As such, *The Shroud Story* achieves its aim.

BOOK REVIEW

SINDONE, la verità

By Gino Moretto

Editrice Elledici 2005

Reviewed by Mark Guscini

This is one of the excellent full-colour guides that are published every so often in Italy, at the very reasonable price of 13 Euros. Covering just about every aspect of the Shroud, with foldouts showing all the details, the book takes us all the way to the restoration work carried out in 2002. The text is all in Italian, but even if you can’t read this language the book is highly recommendable as a top quality Shroud guide.

BOOK REVIEW

Holy Shroud of Turin (1934)

By Arthur Stapylton Barnes

Reprinted by Kessinger Publishing's Rare Mystical Reprints

Reviewed by Mark Guscini

Older Shroud books are not always easy to come by, and when they can be found prices do not fit all economies. This is therefore a welcome reprint for those with an interest in collecting older literature about the Shroud. The author, Arthur Stapylton Barnes, made a pilgrimage to see the Shroud in 1931 and then wrote this book, representing the state of affairs and research at the time.

In some aspects, the book seems remarkably up to date with present investigation. The analysis of the wounds on the body, the affirmation that the image is not a painting and some of the paragraphs about the Shroud in art would be perfectly valid in any Shroud book published today. Other details are now completely out of date thanks to research carried out since the book was written in the 1930's – such as the Vignon vapour theory for image formation and the history of the Shroud, which keeps the cloth in Jerusalem until the fifth century and then places it in Constantinople. Stapylton Barnes does concur with most modern thought in that the Shroud was taken westwards from Byzantium after the fourth crusade in 1204.

Such discrepancies with what we know today are not faults, given that the book was written over seventy years ago. The reprint is most interesting as a record of what was believed at the time, and is highly recommendable for all those of us who build up collections of all Shroud-related literature.