

FAITH AND THE COMPUTER

Fr John Conliss, SVD, Japan

New scientific work is reported, proving by computer analysis that a coin was placed also over the right eye of the man on the Shroud. And more, that this coin can date the Shroud more accurately to the time of Christ than any future tests by the carbon 14 method can do.

For the 'man-in-the street', computer analysis is as yet a mystery. Such claims as these can only be accepted as true, given the necessary 'faith', i.e. faith in science and the integrity of the scientist.

How different is the faith of the Christian, who, long before photography existed, could see in the faint marks on the Shroud an obvious record of the crucifixion of the Lord. And even more so since the photography of our time had revealed the majestic beauty of the face. The 'eyes of faith' reach levels far beyond the capacity of the computer. For even if future scientific work may decipher still more astonishing information encoded in the Shroud image, there will always remain the Nickell-McCrone-Tite-Sox types, with handicapped perception.

If then our Lord in his resurrection has left us this mysterious relic, what a revelation of the divine Artist! The dark shadows of the eyes, richer in nuances of black than a Rembrandt etching, only emphasize the indescribable pathos of the facial expression, and yet all the while conceal the information of the coins!

In vain would computer scientists analyse the masterpieces of a Titian or a Dürer. Those shadows would reveal nothing more than paint.