THE ROME SYMPOSIUM
- ANOTHER CIELT SUCCESS, COMPLETE WITH RUSSIAN SURPRISE!

Rome's Domus Mariae conference centre, chosen by CIELT (France's Centre International d'Etudes sur le Linceul de Turin) for their second Symposium on the Shroud, proved not the most easily accessible of venues for international participants. Sadly also, there were abstentions, and even some expected speakers prove unable to attend, among these Don Fossati from Turin, Père Dubarle and Antoine Legrand, from Paris, and the U.S. pathologist Dr. Robert Bucklin (of *Silent Witness* fame).

Nonetheless the Symposium, specially blessed by Pope John Paul II during an audience some delegates attended in the Paul VI hall the day before, was well supported, with more than 200 participants from as far afield as Argentina, Russia, Mexico, Australia, Canada and the U.S.A., as well as England, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Poland and the Netherlands. The spacious and congenial suburban location, and the generally high quality of presentations made for another conference success for which CIELT deserve the warmest congratulations.

In the Symposium's historical section one speaker with the least distance to travel was Professor Gino Zaninotto, a Rome-based specialist in ancient classical languages, who quoted the little-known 10th century Codex Vossianus Lat. Q 69, in support of the argument that awareness of a full figure imprint on the Image of Edessa very likely stretched back as early as the eighth century. Also from Rome Professor Heinrich Pfeiffer of the Gregorian University showed some fascinating photographs of the veil of Manopello, which he believes to be one and the same as the otherwise last (?) Veronica veil which attracted so many pilgrims to Rome during the Middle Ages. Particularly notable from Pfeiffer's photographs was the Manopello veil's transparency, strikingly similar to Veronica's veil as depicted by the Flemish Master of Flemalle.

From Australia Rex Morgan showed BSTS member Sylvia Bogdanescu's photographs of a fresco from the catacombs which, although badly effaced by time, may be one of the earliest portraits of Christ. Professor Jerome Lejeune of Paris gave a fascinating paper on the Pray manuscript, based on his own visit to Budapest where he had been able to study the manuscript at first hand, and photograph its illustrations in fine detail. Also from Paris, Dr. Michel Bergeret put forward a compelling case for the Shroud, during its so-celled 'Missing Years', having been passed from Otho du Is Roche, one of the leaders of the Fourth Crusade, in a direct genealogical line to Geoffrey de Charny's second wife Jeanne de Vergy. At Ray-sur-Saône, within a few kilometres of where Otho de la Roche lies buried, there is a still extant casket said to have contained the Shroud at this period.

From Germany Dr. Eberhard Lindner, demonstrating the Shroud's image to have been created by electron radiation, argued for the Shroud's unexpectedly high radiocarbon content having been caused by a neutron flux associated with Jesus's Resurrection. From England Ian Dickinson gave two papers, one on his, arguments for the Shroud's dimensions matching the Jewish cubit measure; the other pleading for special conservation measures on the Shroud, including removal of the Holland cloth backing sewn on in 1534.

From the U.S.A. Dr. Gilbert Lavoie, demonstrating the three dimensionality of the body theoretically wrapped in the Shroud, argued for Jesus having been upright at the moment

his image was flashed onto the cloth. From Colorado Springs Dr. John Jackson, characteristically less specific that the man of the Shroud was Jesus, used photographs of Shroud creases to demonstrate, with greater clarity than before, the argument for the Shroud having once been `doubled in four' as the Mandylion of Edessa. Dr. Jackson showed how he had even had constructed a wooden model of how the Shroud may have been encased when folded in this manner.

From Los Angeles Hungarian-born artist Isabel Piczek gave an outstandingly illustrated paper, in part a reworking of her presentation to the BSTS last autumn; but with the addition of the results from entirely new experiments she has recently completed checking on Dr. Walter McCrone's claims that paint particles he had found on the Shroud were responsible for what the eye sees as the Shroud's image. As demonstrated by Isabel, in reality these derive from painted copies of the Shroud known historically to have been pressed against the original to give them special holiness.

From Pennsylvania Paul Maloney drew attention to a puzzling difference between the pollen grains drawn from the Shroud's surface by the late Dr. Max Frei in 1973 and 1978, and those vacuumed from the Shroud by Professor Giovanni Riggi, also in 1978. Whereas Frei's pollens were 'clean', their outer surfaces readily discernible, Riggi's were obscured by a thick mineral coating. Following examination of Frei's notes, and discussions with Riggi, Maloney found that whereas Frei's pollens had been drawn from the image surface of the Shroud, the side that theoretically faced the body, Riggi's had been drawn from the non-image side of the Shroud, the dorsal half of which would have been the side theoretically in direct contact with the limestone of the tomb. As argued by Maloney, this is surely a crucial indication that the Shroud was once genuinely used as a burial cloth in a stone tomb - and for this sort of evidence to be removed during 'conservation' would surely be 'to destroy a critical bit of history inherent in the dust particles on the Shroud.'

This finding of Maloney's gave all the more edge to a forceful presentation by Dr. Alan Adler (a paper thoughtfully dedicated to Father Rlnaldi's memory), explaining both the urgency of the need for expert conservation of the Shroud, and in this same regard the many difficult decisions that need to be taken. For instance, the storage of the Shroud in an inert atmosphere could positively promote the growth of anaerobic organisms, while the use of fungicides and fumigants to kill the Shroud's mite population would serve to positively accelerate oxidation ('If you can smell it, you shouldn't bring it near the Shroud', Dr. Adler warned). Present-day atmospheric pollutants are more destructive than at any previous time in history, and unless the right measures are taken to preserve the Shroud's so subtle image, there is danger that this could simply vanish within a decade.

Yet while Dr. Adler's warnings are serious, and fully needing immediate attention, the Symposium's most dramatic paper, and that offering (potentially) the greatest way forward for Shroud studies since the carbon dating, was that by two Russians, Drs. Andre A. Ivanov and Dmitri A. Kouznetsov of Moscow's Laboratory of Physico-Chemical Research Methods. Young, moustached Dr. Kouznetsov, a winner of the Lenin prize in Russia, gave the paper in person in excellent English, and what he had to say offered potential dynamite to the carbon dating as carried out by the laboratories of Arizona, Zurich and Oxford.

In essence Kouznetsov argued that there are special properties pertaining to linen, deriving from the fact that during manufacture the original flax plants' proteins and lipids

(waxes and fats) are driven out, imparting the remaining fibres with misleadingly higher radiocarbon content. This automatically leads to carbon dates for textiles seeming to be younger they really are, a point which, though unmentioned by Kouznetsov, would certainly explain why, for instance, the wrappings of Manchester Museum's Egyptian mummy no. 1770 were carbon-dated to a thousand years younger than the mummy. Also according to Kouznetsov, small but statistically significant 'enrichments' or additions to the radiocarbon content can occur if the textile has been subjected to unusually high temperatures (85° to 95° C), as in the case of the 1532 fire. This is probably due to further 'evaporation' of the proteins and lipids, but also possibly due to an as yet imperfectly understood process of isotopic exchange.

Although Kouznetsov argued that his and Ivanov's findings are not yet complete, he felt sure that the Oxford, Arizona and Zurich laboratories who worked on the Shroud (and who admitted their relative inexperience with textiles), had not taken such considerations into account. Kouznetsov concluded that although the difficulties of finding an adequate radiocarbon content standard made radiocarbon dating 'an inappropriate approach' for dating textiles such as linen, when the carbon dating of 1988 was recalculated in the light of these new considerations the Shroud was arguably at least nineteen hundred years old, and therefore quite consistent with having once wrapped the body of Jesus.

Predictably, Kouznetsov's presence in Rome had been well-circulated to the press, sparking headlines such as: 'The Shroud: it really is the cloth which wrapped Jesus' (*Il Tempo*); 'The Shroud is of the First Century' (*Il Popolo*); 'The Shroud, a calculation error: the cloth is not less than nineteen centuries old' (*Avvenire*); 'Russians: 'The Shroud is Authentic' (*Il Resto del Carlino*). But the crucial test of the Russian arguments is whether they will stand full scientific scrutiny.