

EDITORIAL

'Believers' versus Detractors: The Debate Intensifies...

Our 40th issue, regrettably a little delayed due to last-minute news from Dr. Garza-Valdes that could not be released before May 24 [see p.5], continues in the best BSTS tradition of including forthright opinions from all sides.

Dr. Kitty Little's address on April 26 [see review p.16], represented perhaps the most pro-authenticity, pro-miracle stance to which the Society has given a platform throughout its eighteen year long history, and provoked vigorous debate to which Dr. Little responded in full measure. Also in this Newsletter we reproduce Italian scholar Professor Emanuela Marinelli's masterly overview of the most recent arguments on the Shroud [p.9 ff], as published in the March edition of the journal *Inside the Vatican*.

From the opposite viewpoint, however, we include radiocarbon dating scientist Professor Harry Gove's lengthy reply [see p.20] to what have been hitherto second-hand reports of his response to the findings of Dr. Garza-Valdes. Though he says he has been misquoted by Professor Dan Scavone, his acknowledgement: "Those of us who attended [the University of Texas Round Table on the Shroud] were convinced of the general validity of Garza-Valdes's findings - there was some sort of 'halo' or bioplastic coating around some of the threads", rings notably at variance with microscopist Dr. Walter McCrone's "I think he [Dr. Garza-Valdes] is out of his mind. ..I have observed... over 60 tape samples from the Shroud... The only coating that I have found on any of those fibres was a paint layer made up of red ochre or vermilion and collagen tempera" [see p.22]. Leonardo theorists Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince's riposte [p.24 ff.] to Dr. Michael Clift's review of their book seems to need no comment.

It may be observed that common to some of the Shroud's more out-spoken detractors is the tendency to label their opponents 'believers', as if only those hide-bound by some religious dogma could any longer uphold the Shroud's authenticity. This Society includes graduates from both arts and science disciplines, and those inclined towards acceptance of the Shroud's authenticity would mostly maintain that this has absolutely nothing to do with any shade of religious or non-religious 'belief, but rather a thoroughly rational attitude towards the totality of available data on the Shroud. Derisive pillorying of those who uphold the Shroud's authenticity as 'believers' does absolutely no credit to those doing the pillorying.