

Book Review

Wrapped up in the Shroud – Chronicle of a Passion

Joseph Marino, with a foreword by Barrie Schwartz

Reviewed by Mark Guscini

This memoir by Joe Marino has caused quite a stir, and rightly so. The book tells the story of Joe's lengthy involvement with the Shroud, how he became a monk and how he left this status (but not the Church) and married the woman of his life and soul mate, Sue Benford. It is a pleasant change from so many books on the Shroud that do little more than repeat what we already know. Joe manages to tell the story of the Shroud in his life on a very personal note, blending it with the beautiful story of how he met Sue and ultimately, how he lived her tragic death from cancer.

Focusing on the Shroud, the book is a first hand account of how Joe and Sue came up with the reweave theory, and how it was adopted by the late scientist Ray Rogers. There are well over 100 pages of appendices, which include Joe's fascinating correspondence with Walter McCrone, where we can see the latter's absolute intolerance so clearly – McCrone is right and everyone else is wrong because they don't know as much as he does.

But the book, in my opinion, is also the perfect example of the huge abyss that divides the USA from Europe on so many levels. In my many years working in international relations I have come across these differences in so many fields, and have consequently always been sensitive to their existence in the Shroud world. Defending the way that Sue Benford was first made aware of the reweave – Jesus told her directly – by saying that nobody has been able to say it didn't happen is something I think you could only get away with on the other side of the Atlantic. And to use divine revelation as an argument for the Shroud's authenticity with Walter McCrone - of all people! - is something I just couldn't imagine any European doing. And Sue's calling the people who appeared to her in the revelations "those guys" will surely grate on European ears. This is not meant as criticism – it is not my place to judge if and when divine revelations take place concerning the Shroud, and how reliable they might be – all I wish to do is say how different it is from anything published these days in Europe.

What is more censurable in this aspect - and this is something I have noticed with many Shroud scholars on both sides of the Ocean – is a complete innocence as to how the authorities, both ecclesiastical and lay, work in Italy and Southern Europe in general. Joe expected them to answer him! Maybe they should, but that is beside the point. They won't. And he is surprised that the Turin authorities did not accept proposals for study by Bill Meacham, after all of Meacham's vitriolic criticism of the "restoration" work done in 2002.

Joe complains, perhaps rightly, that the Italians tend to downplay STURP and suggest that they did everything themselves. They did the same with the Sudarium of Oviedo, managing to come up with a catalogue that did not even mention the Spanish investigation team, which has done 99% of the research onto the cloth (and they also managed to print the main photograph upside down). But this is no worse than American scientists' frequent distrust of their counterparts in other countries. Why

should anyone else have been involved in Mechthild Flury-Lemberg's work in 2002? She was probably the most competent person in the world to do the work she did – why all the fuss because the Turin authorities did not consult with the USA? And all of us English speakers have a most annoying tendency to think and say that work has not been published until it is published in English. Good science and history is just as valid in French, Spanish and Italian. Surely the Shroud is above all our petty little countries and national pride.

Well I seem to have come right off the track and almost left Joe's book behind. Summing up, it is a most entertaining read and a refreshingly original way of writing a Shroud book. Recommended.