

FACT OR FANTASY?

A Hitherto Unknown Fresco of a Shroud Exposition

An article on the Shroud, reviewing the latest book by Professoressa Emanuella Marinelli [see later in this issue], appears in the October issue of the very glossy Italian journal *Jesus* published by Periodici San Paolo (via Liberazione 4, 12051 Alba (Cn) Italy). Among the excellent colour photographs is a reproduction in colour of a fresco in the Vatican Museums depicting the Shroud being exhibited from a high tower (see opposite page, above), purportedly, according to the picture caption, in Turin. An unusually meagre number of devotees are represented on waste ground in front of the tower, while behind looms a cathedral-like building which, if the location is indeed Turin, would be the city's familiar 'Duomo', or Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

The problem to the fresco, which from the style looks to be 16th century, is that the Cathedral bears no apparent resemblance to that of Turin, even discounting the addition of Guarino Guarini's Royal Chapel during the 17th century. The fresco is not among the illustrations actually included in Emanuela Marinelli's book, and an email enquiry to her produced the information that two highly erudite Shroud scholars, Don Luigi Fossati of Turin and Prof. Gino Zaninotto of Rome, are divided regarding whether or not the scene is just the artist's imagination. According to Don Fossati the painting dates from 1594, the church depicted cannot be Turin Cathedral, and the tower is just a fantasy. According to Zaninotto, on the other hand, the church is Turin Cathedral and the tower is a part of Turin's ancient walls.

Given such disagreements, can any reader throw light on the mystery? In the earlier 16th century the Shroud was recorded as exhibited from the Bellanda Tower in Nice. Despite much of Nice, particularly its castle area, having been flattened by the British in the 18th century, the Bellanda Tower still stands as a naval museum, so the French should be able to confirm that the scene is not Nice. Another possibility is Vercelli, where the Shroud spent a couple of decades. If the scene cannot be these, then it must most likely be accredited to the artist's imagination.