

CORRESPONDENCE

In SPECTRUM #5, Dec. 1982, we published a letter from the Rev. Charles Foley of England, addressed to the Rev. Luigi Fossati, S.D.8. of Turin. Referring to Don Fossati's article "Was the So-called Acheropita of Edessa the Holy Shroud" (SPECTRUM #3, June 1982), Fr. Foley stoutly disclaims the hypothesis of identity of the Holy Shroud with any icon. Don Fossati's reply could not be included in the subsequent issue (March 1983) because of lack of space.

I heartily thank Father Foley for his observations on the article concerning various Holy Faces in reference to the Holy Shroud. However, I would like to have more precise documentation on these points:

1. It is a well-known fact (even though this was not mentioned in my article) that Msgr. Wilpert inspected the Veronica Veil of St Peters. But when was he a "member of the Holy Shroud Commission"?
2. Where is it clearly stated that there was a "cover guard for the original cloth" of the Veronica Holy Face?
3. In Rome's Church of Jesus, there is a copy of the Veronica with eyes closed, drawn from the original early in the 17th century, as is documented on the back (SPECTRUM #3, pg 17, fig. 2). How can we explain the existence of this copy? If the original really had "No face. No figure. No suggestion of either.", then indeed we would find ourselves confronted by a double deception lasting for centuries.

I would like to emphasize two details, mentioned in the article, regarding the Holy Face of Genoa and the Vatican's Edessa image: the Genoa Face has the eyes closed; the Vatican Face is on herringbone cloth. These details were reported by authors who studied the icons without the least reference to the Shroud, without preconceived intentions to demonstrate a theory; and they ought to be the starting-point for a more ample research, global and coordinated, on the earliest holy faces known to us.

These details were not taken into consideration by the authors cited by Father Foley, yet they are of extreme importance for a deeper understanding of the evolution of holy faces, even though many other questions will arise before the genesis and successive developments of the various holy faces can be explained.

Very genially and, I may add, very aptly, Father Foley chose "*Infalsificabile*" as the title to his report given at the Bologna Congress (Nov. 1981). Accepting the authenticity of the Shroud because it is "unfalsifiable", obviously we admit that it exists and implicitly we must also admit that it was displayed in various places (as pollen study demonstrates) and consequently seen as an object, and then *interpreted* according to the aesthetic requirements of the time and place.

The Holy Face of Genoa demonstrates this: in the more ancient period, a face with eyes closed (inspired or copied from the Shroud?); in more recent periods, a face with eyes open, according to the artistic style of the era and according to the talent of the painters who retouched it.

In fact we have to admit that, in the past, particularly in the earliest centuries, those who saw the Shroud found it not only *incomprehensible* but also *non-reproducible* in reference to the prevailing stylistic canons. And it is precisely because of the need to transmit an acceptable, comprehensible reality, that artists passed from a representation with closed eyes to one with open eyes. This is a vast area of research which could lead art historians to very interesting conclusions.

The hypothesis of the *non-identity* Shroud =Edessa Image, at one time acceptable, now can and must be re-discussed when we consider the primigenial origin of the traditions concerning the holy faces. Colette Dufour Bozzo and Carlo Bertelli already have shed light on this aspect of the subject.

We must not forget that it was believed that the original Edessa Image—i.e., the prototype—*disappeared mysteriously*, as we read in the texts which speak of it. And it seems that the most ancient copies of it were considered to have been *miraculously* produced; an opinion, of course, far from the real facts, as we have discovered.

Therefore, patiently we must begin again at the beginning, even though so very much has already been said and written. We must acutely discern what is legend and what is history, what is miraculousness and what is concrete reality, in order to discover the motivations, the connections and the dependencies which underlie the concept and the realization of the earliest holy faces, in the hope of finally ascertaining if indeed they do—or do not—stem from the Holy Shroud.

LUIGI FOSSATI