

RECENTLY PUBLISHED

SEBASTIANO RODANTE: *Le Realtei della Sindone* (The Realities of the Shroud; subtitled "Reflections of a Doctor"). Massimo, Milan, 1987. 297 pp.; illus. b&w, color; Appendices; Biblio.; Glossary of medical/scientific terms. Preface by Luigi Gedda. Lire 30.000

As often happens when translating from Italian, we come across a word that looks and sounds like its English counterpart, but a direct transposition would scumble its particular nuance. Dr. Rodante's "reflections" are not "a thought, idea or opinion formed, or a remark made, as a result of meditation" (Webster). In his Preface, the Author remarks that his reflections are based on his knowledge of the work of other researchers and, above all, on what emerges from an objective medical examination of the sindonic image. Having weighed all the evidence available and considered each aspect with scientific rigor, he can confidently speak of the realities of the Shroud.

Dr. Rodante's approach is that of a medical scientist preparing an exhaustive case history on a patient; and since he is a pediatrician, his manner is refined by his sensitivity in dealing with little patients, some of whom are unable, yet, to describe "what hurts", as well as infants who can but cry. Daily practice demands gentle tenderness, unruffled patience and a confidence-inspiring serenity. Ideal for interrogating the eloquent silence of the Shroud.

Since 1960, Rodante has concentrated his research on the question of the genesis of the image. The questions he now poses are four: Is the Shroud the work of an artist? Did it cover a man crucified as Christ was? Did it cover Christ in apparent death? Did it cover Christ really dead? Each question implies numerous other questions and, good listener as he is, Rodante considers the hypotheses of previous and contemporary authors, paying equal attention and respect to contrary convictions and objections. Not the slightest or remotest clue escapes his careful inspection, and every laboratory test that can be made is tried until the answer, whatever it might be, is distinctly clear.

Such perseverance stands behind Dr. Rodante's experiments to reproduce an image similar to that of the Shroud; trials repeated, over and over again, using a linen cloth, dry or wet with various solutions, in every imaginable combination, laid over a plaster cast or a corpse smeared with one solution or another, often in a Sicilian catacomb. But it was not until, reflecting on a Lucan account of Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, that he realized that the one essential ingredient in image formation was bloody sweat.

"About twenty years ago," Rodante writes, "for the first time in the history of sindonic studies, a solution of bloody sweat was used." This was applied to the model, and a solution of aloes and myrrh spread on the linen. Results repeatedly give the same characteristics as the somatic-haematic imprints on the Shroud. Recent experiments include the use of a chinband, which permits a better definition of the frontal planes of the face (see *Spectrum* #15, p.32).

One of these many experiments was especially intriguing to me: the linen cloth was moistened with a solution of aloes, myrrh and oil; after the image was produced, the linen was boiled in laundry soap, then immersed in boiling oil. The image was unchanged. Can this give credence to Antoine de Lalaing who, writing about the exposition of 1503, remarks that the Shroud had been subjected to these drastic tests for authenticity, and the trial by fire as well? Though he does not state that the proofs were performed on this occasion.

Inquiries into the historical background conclude with a chapter on the Congresses from 1978 to 1984. The titles of all Reports given in Congresses from 1939 to 1981 are listed in an Appendix.

Part II enters upon direct examination of the "patient". Twenty-seven pages are devoted to the wounds on the head, caused by the Crown of Thorns. It is an amplified study of the article which first appeared in *Sindon*, October 1976, and then honored the pages of the first issue of *Spectrum*, December 1981.

A study of the chest and the lance wound lead to the question of the cause of death. One of the hypotheses advanced in this regard and supported by a number of authors, is that death was caused by a heart attack. Rodante emphasizes that all those who propose this hypothesis identify the Man of the Shroud with Christ: and this in itself disproves the theory: for we have a rich background of the last three years of Jesus' life, and a precise and minute description of the last three days, the last hours.... Information which, for a doctor, excludes any possibility of heart failure or disease.

Finally, the question of whether or not the Person figured on the Shroud was really dead, or just in a coma, as some authors are pleased to claim. To find out if the Man was breathing, even from the diaphragm, Rodante prepared a plaster cast in his usual way, with attention to the epsilon bloodflow on the forehead and flows on the hair. When the image and clots were sufficiently formed on his linen cloth (about 20 hours), he gingerly shifted the cloth a few millimeters aside, then waited for the allotted time to elapse. The resulting bloodstains were doubled, blurred, in total contrast to the Shroud's clear-cut clot-images, proof in themselves that for the entire time that the Man was under the cloth, he lay in absolute immobility. Add to this the experiment made on a person freshly dead, to ascertain what effect the gases of incipient decomposition would have upon the linen, and perhaps one will begin to envision the scope of experimentation, the punctiliousness to detail, the

mental openness to every possibility and the natural, familiar reconstruction of past events which constitute the work that Dr. Rodante has unflaggingly and most modestly carried on for forty-five years.

A distinctive characteristic of this book flows naturally from the personality of the man who wrote it: as he must appear to his young patients, a man of fatherly demeanor, joyful heart and gentle manners, he tells rather than teaches, explains rather than propounds. An excellent instance is the way he elucidates our problem with John 20:6-9. Although he adds nothing new to the scholarly exegesis of Rev. Andre Feuillet (Acts of the 1978 Congress, reprinted in *Spectrum* #4), his easy familiarity with the Greek language brings this passage vividly alive.

I have over-extended the limits of a book review. But when medical testimony so exactly corroborates and completes the Gospel narratives of the Passion, Death and Burial of Jesus, one cannot fail to applaud a book which, in our day of advanced technology and accumulated studies, medically identifies the Victim as indisputably as did Pierre Barbet in his day.

DOROTHY CRISPINO

LUIGI FOSSATI and LIDIA DE BLASI GIACCARIA: "Carlo Borromeo a Torino; L'Ostensione della Sindone del 1582 in un scritto inedito", in *Studi Piemontese*, 1987, vol. XVI, 2, pp. 429-436.

The great saint of Milan is very dear to the Turinese because four times he came on pilgrimage to venerate the Holy Shroud (1578, 1581, 1582, 1584), each time accompanied by other prelates who, fortunately for us, left day-by-day accounts of the voyages and the experience of looking upon the Shroud.

The subject of this study is the hitherto unpublished Report of Carlo Bascapé after the pilgrimage of 1582. A short excerpt is given in "The Face of Christ in the Copies of the Holy Shroud". After a short historical introduction, the text of the letter is given in full. Bascapé, later Bishop of Novara and biographer of St. Charles, makes a conscious effort to inform his novices of what one sees on the Shroud, but the veracity of that Image, with its blood and wounds, with its majesty and serenity, overwhelms even his disciplined mind.

Das Grosse Bibellexikon, vol. I, 1987, published by Brockhaus, West Germany, will be followed by two more volumes of Bible history, archeology, theology, etc. To say that a book is "lavishly illustrated" often means that careless cutlines and superficial paragraphs are interspersed amongst brightly colored pictures. Reproductions in this encyclopedia are integral to the articles contributed by scholars and experts in each subject, and are in themselves objects of study.

Among articles signed "R.R." (Rainer Riesner), one is of particular interest to us: "Begräbnis- und Trauersitten (Burial and Mourning Customs). References in the Old Testament are cited (pp. 173-176), then those in the New Testament (pp. 176-178). Among his sources, Dr. Prof. Riesner cites several sindonologists: Bulst, Robinson, Wilson, Feuillet, Heller, Fasola... and Damian of the Cross, for her article "The Tomb of Christ from Archaeological Sources", in *Shroud Spectrum International*, December 1985.

In the section dealing with the Burial of Jesus, it is Dr. Gilbert Lavoie who is mentioned for his article explaining that, according to Jewish custom (Jo. 19:40), the body of Jesus was not washed.

Professor Riesner, Doctor of Theology, taught New Testament studies at Tübingen University; he is now a research fellow there, doing studies on Pauline chronology.

ALSO RECEIVED:

Emeroteca Sindonica is like a scrapbook of news items about the Shroud from Italian periodicals. The January-April, 1987, issue comes in a new format, on 7" x 10" white paper, center-stitched. It is not only easier to manipulate but also much more pleasing to the eye. The founder and editor, as reported in *Spectrum* #17 (Dec. 1985) and #22 (Mar. 1987, p. 20) is Edoardo Garello, who collaborated with Mario Salomone in a presentation to the Siracuse Congress on dating the Shroud by infrared illumination.

Twenty-four pages of news about the Shroud witness to the unabating ferment of interest in Piedmont. One item only can be mentioned; it is a photocopy of a letter:

The President of the Italian Republic, addressing Prof. Modestino Zeuli, of the Faculty of Mathematical Sciences of the University of Turin, is pleased to personally confer on him the title of Professor Emeritus.

The document continues with warm congratulations and heartfelt gratitude for Prof. Zeuli's prestigious contributions to science over more than half a century. We too extend our congratulations to the sympathetic friend who showed us, by mathematics, in *Spectrum* #10, that "Jesus Christ is the Man of the Shroud".

Emmaus is a booklet of around 50 pages, prepared by Mons. Giulio Ricci for his "catechists of the Passion". In #10, September 1987, Mons. Ricci presents Part I of an essay wherein he speculates on the outcome of carbon dating of the Shroud threads, reviewing what we should think if the "first results" are negative. Part II (Dec. 1987) reflects on what we should think if the test is positive.

1988 begins the eleventh year of the catechetical classes, one of the activities of the Centro Romano di Sindonologia.