

SOME RECENT SOCIETY MEETINGS

12 May 1983 - The Central Library, Kensington

Subject: "A JEWISH VIEW OF THE SHROUD OF TURIN"

Speaker: Victor Tunkel, of the Faculty of Laws, Queen Mary College, University of London

As a subject the Shroud traverses many religious divisions, and on 12 May it was a particular privilege to hear the views of a Jewish scholar, Victor Tunkel of the University of London. Victor Tunkel began his talk with a gentle reproof to many Shroud writers for relying too heavily on Christian sources rather than consulting the acknowledged complex world of Jewish Law and practice. He pointed out the lack of need for many of the theological arguments concerning whether the body of Jesus would or would not have been washed before burial. It was quite unnecessary to postulate the man of the Shroud having gone unwashed due to haste. Jewish Law is quite explicit that anyone who died a bloody death, as from crucifixion, would have gone unwashed, because it was important in Pharisaic belief for all elements of the body, including the life-blood, to be kept together. This was so that the body would be kept complete for a physical resurrection at the end of time.

The same need for lack of disturbance of bloodstains meant that while one who died an unbloody death would have been buried in relatively normal clothes - shirt, breeches, etc - Jesus would have been wrapped in a single sheet called in Hebrew a *sovev* (the word means "to surround" or "go around") readily corresponding to what we know of the Turin Shroud.

Victor Tunkel accordingly found the Shroud perfectly compatible with what he would expect of a Jew crucified in first century AD. Palestine. He went on to discuss other popular misconceptions concerning the Jewish thought of Jesus' time. From the Christian viewpoint the only jarring feature of Victor Tunkel's talk was his suggestion that the spear thrust into Jesus' side had probably missed the heart, and that the "resurrection" was therefore explicable in straightforward physical terms. But this was totally outweighed by his obvious support for the Shroud's genuine, Jewish antiquity.

The lecture was tape-recorded, and copies are available from Rodney Hoare, Hall Cottage, Old Road, Raddington, Nottingham NG11 6NF.

16 September 1983 - The Central Library, Kensington

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by open discussion

"A 1984 SHROUD TESTING - WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?"

The formalities of the Annual General Meeting were quickly dealt with, the Society's existing officers being returned, and a credit balance of £160 being declared. Welcomed to the Society's Steering Committee was Fr. Tom Carroll of Savio House, Bollington, Cheshire, who has been appointed by the Salesian order as responsible for shroud

photographs following the death of Mr. Daniel Allen-Griffiths last year. To resolve previous disharmonies, and because of Adrian Whittlesea's expressed wish to be released of B.S.T.S. photographic responsibilities, it was agreed that all U.K. Shroud photographic orders should in future be channelled through Fr. Carroll. The Society extends its grateful thanks to Adrian Whittlesea for his quiet, conscientious work on Shroud photographs during the past years.

The discussion part of the meeting was then opened by Ian Wilson with a review of STURP's work on the Shroud in 1978, and ways this could be improved upon in any 1984 testing. He explained that STURP was already actively making plans for a 1984 testing, and it would be a fundamental mistake if there was a repeat of the 1978 omission of personnel with museum or art gallery experience. Individuals with textile knowledge had similarly been lacking. Dr. Allan Mills pointed out that STURP's photography had failed to provide even a scale, which would have been routine in the work of a museum or art gallery scientific team.

The meeting then turned to consideration of some positive recommendations for any 1984 testing: properly comprehensive and definitive conventional, ultra-violet, infra-red and X-ray photography, to be conducted by individuals with museum and/or art gallery experience; tangential lighting photography by the same; inclusion of textile specialists, such as our own Elizabeth Crowfoot and John Tyrer; use of archaeological and forensic methods for analysis of Shroud surface stains, damage and debris; use of filmed endoscopy for examination of the Shroud's underside; application of the latest available radiocarbon dating techniques; above all, involvement of specialists from the scientific laboratories of the world's leading museums and art galleries. It was agreed that these recommendations should be circulated to STURP, ASSIST and others involved in the planning of a 1984 testing. Ian Wilson explained that in order to meet a STURP deadline a draft document of this kind had already been sent.

The meeting ended with a showing of Dr. Alan Whanger's slides illustrating the remarkable congruity between the Shroud image and early Byzantine Christ portraits.

21 October 1983 - The Basil Street Hotel

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETING

Speaker: Dr. John Jackson, Director, Shroud of Turin Research Project
(STURP)

In Europe for an appearance on Italian television, Dr. Jackson made a stop-over in London, and suggested this might provide an opportunity to meet B.S.T.S. scientific members. Some hurried telephone calls were made, and a meeting assembled at short notice in a hotel room kindly arranged by Bill Sinclair.

Dr. Jackson first related some of his recent adventures in Italy, during which he had met Pope John Paul II and presented him with a Shroud three-dimensional sculpture. He then outlined some of his own recent work on cloth drape, and the mapping function of human body contours that seemed intrinsic in the Shroud's image. A scientific paper on this work

was handed to the Society Secretary, copies of which can be made available to members on application, enclosing an S.A.E.

Discussion then turned to the plans being made for a possible 1984 testing. Dr. Jackson commented that the British draft recommendations had not been well received by the STURP group. He and his fellow members seemed to be under the impression that those whom the British Society was proposing were not scientists but mere "opinion merchants" from museums and art galleries. It was explained that the British recommendations were for the involvement of individuals equally as scientific as those of the STURP team, but with the added ingredient of professional experience in the scientific analysis of archaeological and art objects.

There was a lively debate, but it was agreed that it was in everyone's interest to work for Anglo-U.S. understanding and co-operation in any future shroud testing.

28 October 1983 - The Central Library, Kensington

Subject: "FROM CONSTANTINOPLE TO THE DE CHARNYS"

First Speaker: Dr. Eugene Csocsán de Várarallja, priest of the Uniat Byzantine rite, and lecturer, A.E.I. Oxford University

Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja introduced his talk by showing slides of Christ portraits on Byzantine coins, and comparing these with the face on the Shroud. Acknowledging some validity to the examples studied by Dr. Alan Whanger, he showed that the congruities became even more remarkable on coins minted after the arrival of the Mandylion in Constantinople in 944 AD. A particularly striking example discussed by him was a nomisma of Basil II and Constantine VIII, from the historical Museum, Heraklion, on which is to be observed a particularly Shroud-like contour to Christ's nose; see below:



Turning his attention to the Shroud/Mandyllion's subsequent fate, Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja noted that according to Byzantine writer Nicholas Mesarites the cloth was in the chapel of the Pharos, within Constantinople's imperial palace, in the year 1201. Three years later, at the time of the Crusader sack, the French chronicler Villehardouin reported this part of the palace to have been under the charge of the Hungarian-born empress Mary-Margaret, a woman who, according to Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja, most likely played an important part in the Shroud's subsequent history. Widowed in the course of the sack, she lost no time in marrying Crusader leader Boniface de Montferrat, moving to Thessalonica and taking the Shroud/Mandyllion with her. One clue to this was her renaming a Thessalonica church "Church of the Acheiropoietos" (another name for the Mandyllion) suggestive that this was made a temporary home for the Shroud. Another clue, in Thessalonica's church of St. Demetrios, was a very Shroud-like fresco from Mary-Margaret's time.

Widowed for a second time, Mary-Margaret was still relatively young when she took as her third husband Nicholas de St. Omer, a member of the same family as one of the founders of the Order of Knights Templar. Although Mary-Margaret's subsequent fate is obscure, it is known that her son William de St. Omer in 1242 took refuge in the Templars' castle at Clissa during a Tartar invasion, dying shortly afterwards. William's epitaph, in the cathedral of Trau, not far from Clissa, is particularly suggestive that he had the Shroud, and that through him the cloth passed to the Order of Templar.

According to Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja the Mandyllion copy in Laon Cathedral (the "holy face" of Laon) was copied from the Shroud while this was in Sirmium, one clue being the icon's Church Slavonic inscription "the image of the Lord on the cloth". The language of this inscription-suggested its origin in Sirmium's Szvaszentdemeter monastery.

Because of the complex nature of Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja's talk a fuller summary, kindly made by Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja, is available from the Society Secretary.

Second Speaker Noel Curren-Briggs, author and genealogist, Fellow of the Society of Genealogists and consultant to Debrett's Peerage

Noel Curren-Briggs followed Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja's talk, explaining his task as reconstructing the Shroud's history after 1242. He expressed his support for Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja's association of the Shroud with Mary Margaret and William de St. Omer, and thought it highly likely that it was via this connection the Shroud came into the possession of the knights Templar. In support of the Knights Templar Order's subsequent ownership of the Shroud he cited Hugues de Pairaud's description of the Templar "idol" viewed by him at Montpellier: having "four feet, two in front and two in back". As remarked by Noel Curren-Briggs, nothing could better describe the Shroud's double image, with its legs and feet at front and rear.

Mr. Curren-Briggs greatest attention was however devoted to the field in which he is specialist, the genealogy of the de Charny and de Vergy families, the first uncontested owners of the Shroud as we know it today. Looking at the origins of both families, he found them closely associated back through several generations, and surprisingly well connected with the ruling houses of Savoy, Burgundy and Constantinople. Noel Curren-Briggs produced his own genealogical charts illustrating the complex sets of relationships, and made these available for members to study. He identified the first Shroud-owning Geoffrey de Charny as son of Jean de Charny, and as such associated with the lordship of Mont Saint Jean and several Knights Templar.

On a personal visit to Mont Saint Jean Noel Currer-Briggs noted a surprising number of hitherto unexplained wayside crosses, all of similar age and design, and suggestive that the place was once a pilgrimage centre. Was this evidence, he wondered, of an early, as yet unrecorded cult of the Shroud? Clearly there is much still to be learned.

Noel Currer-Briggs has written a book on his Shroud genealogical researches, inclusive of reference to the findings of Dr. Csocsán de Várarallja. This book is in the course of production, and full publishing details will be announced in the next *Newsletter*.