

OBITUARIES

Within a matter of weeks of each other, and at the very time that moves on the dating of the Shroud were at their height, there died two of Turin's most notable figures associated with the Shroud.

I. DON PIERO COERO BORGA

The first, on 23 September, was Don Piero Coero Borga. Born at Saluzzo, a few miles to the south of Turin, on 12 December 1924, Don Coero was ordained in June 1947, and during the 1950s began the duties which brought him to be one Turin's cardinals' foremost advisors on Shroud matters. With the encouragement of Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, from 1959 Don Coero became first Secretary of the newly founded Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia (International Centre of Sindonology), based at 28 Via S. Domenico, Turin. Don Coero here busied himself with the assemblage of a Shroud library and museum, inclusive of items such as the original Pia negatives and camera, and at around the same time began the first international Shroud journal *Sindon*, encouraging articles from Shroud scholars from all over the world. It was not unusual for issues of *Sindon* to feature articles in English and French, although those in the Italian language predominated.

In 1973 Don Coero played a major part in the organization of the television showing of the Shroud, but in the most recent years, behind the scenes, he tended quite forcefully to oppose moves for the Shroud to be scientifically tested. He was particularly opposed to carbon dating, arguing that the Shroud is not an appropriate object for such a test, and that any results obtained were likely to be negative and misleading.

II. CARDINAL MICHELE PELLEGRINO

Turin's second loss was on October 10 in the person of Michele Pellegrino, Cardinal Archbishop of Turin from 1965 to 1977, and immediate predecessor of the present Archbishop, Cardinal Ballestrero. Born the son of a brick-layer in 1903, at twenty-two years old Pellegrino was ordained parish priest at Centallo, a neighbouring village to Don Coero's Saluzzo, and went on to become a noted specialist in the doctrines of the Church Fathers, opening the fifth international conference on this subject held at Oxford in 1967.

But already during the early 1960s Pellegrino had distinguished himself as "a new kind of bishop", particularly by his contributions to Pope John XXIII's Second Vatican Council. During this he argued forcefully in favour of free expression of theological views:

If each one knows that he is permitted to express his opinion with wholesome freedom, he will act with straightforwardness and sincerity that should shine in the Church. Otherwise the abominable plague of dishonesty and hypocrisy can hardly be avoided.

In 1965 Pope Paul VI appointed Pellegrino archbishop, then Cardinal of the notoriously problematic diocese of Turin, thus at one and the same time making him custodian of the Shroud, a particularly suitable choice in view of Pellegrino's modern and open-minded views. He specifically encouraged his priests to study subjects such as physics, biology and history. As remarked in his *Times* obituary:

He never forgot his humble origins. He lived frugally, wore a simple cassock and a wooden cross, and even as a cardinal eschewed the title "your eminence", insisting instead on being addressed as "father"

And as recalled by Father Maurus Green OSB:

My profound esteem for "Padre" Michele began during the international press conference held the day before the televised Shroud exposition of 1973. The world press was full of expectancy when Padre Michele walked in. Immediately his habitual calm imposed itself as he answered tricky questions with authority and detachment. As guardian of the Shroud, he insisted on the religious nature of the forthcoming exposition. As famous patristic scholar, he responded with all the objectivity of his scientific training.

I next met Padre Michele in the home of Don Vincenzo, the parish priest of Vallo, where he had retired with his vast patristic library. Here he received his guests with charming simplicity, interest and concern. Among Don Vincenzo's parishioners, farming families and Fiat workers, he shone as a simple shepherd, completely at home ... a true father if a strongly united family.