

## THE 'SHROUD' FACE ON A COIN PRECISELY DATABLE TO 692-5 AD...

Shortly before Christmas, Mario Fusco and Prof. Gino Zaninotto of the Collegamento Pro Sindone, Rome, kindly sent for review in this Newsletter a copy of the latest book by Shroud scholars Professors Werner Bulst and Heinrich Pfeiffer, *Das Echte Christusbild* (The True Likeness of Christ). Since your Editor's command of German is very limited, so far it has been possible to provide only an inadequate, provisional summary of the main arguments (see p.14)

But needing no translation is the significance of a Byzantine coin, the obverse and reverse of which Bulst and Pfeiffer reproduce as their figs. 5 and 6 [see opposite]. Part of the collection of the Museum at St. Gallen, a Swiss town a few miles east of Zurich, the coin is a gold solidus of a type already familiar both to coin specialists and to students of the Shroud.

Minted in Constantinople between the years 692 and 695, in the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justinian II, this coin type broke new ground in its time by featuring the face of Christ on the obverse, or 'heads' side, and the full-length figure of the emperor, standing, on the reverse, or 'tails' side. Quite a few examples survive, the Christ faces on these varying one from another due to the vagaries of condition, different coin dies, and the unevenness of early minting methods.

The similarity of the Justinian II Christ image to the face on the Shroud has been remarked before, most notably by Dr. Alan Whanger in the States, who has graphically demonstrated it with his polarized overlay technique. But, subjective though any reaction to it has to be, the St. Gallen coin really is the most spectacular example yet brought to light. The Christ face on this bears so uncanny a resemblance to the Shroud face that it poses one of the strongest challenges yet to the date attributed to the Shroud by carbon dating.





Reverse of the St.Gallen Justinian II coin, showing the emperor Justinian dressed in the loros symbolic of Christ's shroud.

Reinforcing this is the stole-like garment to be seen as the most striking part of the Emperor's costume on the reverse [see overleaf]. Known to the Eastern Orthodox world as the loros, as long ago as 1959 the American scholar James D. Breckenridge described

the symbolic significance of this in a specialist monograph totally unrelated to Shroud studies: 'In the Byzantine... Book of Ceremonies... we find the loros mentioned with reference to only one occasion, Easter Sunday... Here the costume is described as symbolizing both the death and resurrection of Christ; the loros, wound about the body, like a winding sheet, is yet studded with gems and embroidered with gold.' [James D. Breckenridge, *The Numismatic Iconography of Justinian II*, New York, The American Numismatic Society, 1959, p.36]