

## EDITORIAL

By Ian Wilson

'Truth?' said Pilate 'What is that?' [John 18: 38]

We live in an imperfect world. The appearance of the last issue of this Newsletter under the mast-head TURIN SHOUD - a piece of mis-keying which I, your editor, must not only have inadvertently perpetrated but also completely failed to spot! - is testimony enough to my personal fallibility, and none of us has any claim to knowing truth. But in recent years there has been an unnerving trend for individuals to come into the subject of the Shroud from outside, to invent some predictably headline-grabbing theory, and then blithely to claim that they know the solution to its mystery. We saw this with **Kersten and Gruber** and their 'The Shroud is genuine but it proves Jesus didn't die on the cross theory.' We saw it with **Picknett and Prince** and their 'Leonardo faked it' theory. Now in this issue [see Recent Publications,] we witness the emergence of yet another claim of this genre with **Knight and Lomas's** 'The Shroud's image is the imprint of crucified Templar Jacques de Molay' t theory. To add insult to such injury, we even find one of the U.K.'s more respected newspapers reporting the BSTS's **Dr.Allan Mills** as supporting the theory that the Shroud is the imprint of a crusader crucified by Saracens, when as Dr.Mills has been quick to insist, he believes nothing of the kind.

But in the face of all this arguable misinformation, mostly coming from outsiders, can those of us who count ourselves as insiders claim any greater knowledge of the solution to the Shroud mystery? If we are honest with ourselves, none of us can. Even from within our own ranks experts of all kinds - physicians, biochemists, physicists, microanalysts, historians, genealogists and many more - bombard us with their interpretations of Shroud data so conflicting one from another that the result, far from any greater understanding, is instead greater bewilderment. For this reason it behoves anyone and everyone at the present time to adopt the most scrupulous caution either in putting forward an argument of their own, or in voicing their support for someone else's, *even if that argument seems to support the Shroud's authenticity.*

As a case in point, particular concern needs to be expressed over a statement recently made, undoubtedly in all good faith, in the Holy Shroud Guild Newsletter, one of the BSTS's American counterparts. In the November 1995 issue the Guild's present editor **Father Fred Brinkmann**, C.Ss.R., has written of the Shroud carbon dating research by Russian scientist **Dr.Dmitri Kouznetsov**: 'His [Dr.Kouznetsov's] research is extremely sound and he is not releasing any information or research which is not reproducible by another scientist. He can guarantee that the Shroud is at least 650 years older than the 1988 carbon 14 test has shown.' Of course those of us who continue to regard the Shroud as authentic would like to believe that Dr.Kouznetsov's research is indeed all that Fr.Fred Brinkmann says of it. And who knows, perhaps it really is?

But, as we reported last September in BSTS Newsletter 41, the highly respected radiocarbon dating scientists **Paul Damon, Douglas Donahue and A.J.T. Jull** of the

University of Arizona's radiocarbon dating unit have all quite specifically stated that they have been unable to reproduce what Kouznetsov claims. Nor are there any guarantees that we can accept Dr.Kouznetsov's defence of himself against these scientists, as published in Newsletter 42. It is true that newspapers of the calibre of the London Times [23 March 1996], on the strength of Dr.Kouznetsov's publication in the Journal of Archaeological Science [23: 109-122], have given some serious attention to his arguments. But they have also given equally serious attention to his detractors, reporting Jull and his colleagues as quite specifically saying that they have failed to reproduce Kouznetsov's experimental results, and adding "This [Kouznetsov's] work is clearly flawed in several respects. We believe that the carbon-14 methods described have not had appropriate control experiments performed." Jull and co. are also reported as being especially critical of Kouznetsov's measurements apparently having been carried out on an 'untested piece of equipment with no reference to normal procedures of reproducibility, standards, and control".

At the time of this Newsletter's going to press, Dr.Kouznetsov is reportedly in Italy, where his claims are continuing to be received with considerable enthusiasm. But from this Editor and others' quite independent recent dealings with him, there are some growing concerns that this enthusiasm may be seriously mis-placed. If Kouznetsov's explanations of how the radiocarbon dating erred are as worthless as Damon, Donahue and Jull say they are, then it behoves all who support the Shroud's authenticity firmly to distance themselves from him and his team's claims just as soon as possible, before a more thorough and more highly publicised de-bunking of them further damages the Shroud's own still all-too-fragile credibility. Whatever the truth of the Shroud is, that truth is as much prey to the mistakes and misinformation of those seemingly in favour of its authenticity, as of those quite definitely against....