

Nice

12-13 May, 1997:

Some Notes on the Nice Symposium

by

Mark Guscini

The French Shroud group **CIELT's** Third International Symposium on the Shroud was held at the Hotel Westminster, Nice on 12 and 13 May 1997, under the overall chairmanship of CIELT president **Daniel Raffard de Brienne**, and I thoroughly enjoyed this event. It was a particular pleasure meeting for the first time many people whom I already 'knew' by phone and post, such as **Kim Dreisbach, Isabel Piczek**, etc. But this said, I have to admit that I found some of the speakers quite disappointing, although maybe they thought the same about my presentation. I have not included everybody, just the ones that were new or interesting:

Professor André Marion and Mme. Anne-Laure Courage-Morel: 'Deciphering 'Ghost' Lettering Visible on the Shroud'

The Professor and his student **Mme. Courage-Morel** were apparently from the Institute of Theoretical and Applied Optics (IOTA), Paris, but their topic, supposed Latin and Greek inscriptions on the Shroud, was to me most unconvincing. The so-called 'letters' they 'see' could be anything with a bit of imagination. One of their inscriptions does not even make sense. They see ΨEKIA (psskia) and claim that Ψ is an abbreviation for OΨIE, so this would then mean something like 'the shadow of a face'. However, Ψ cannot be an abbreviation for OΨIE. Greek abbreviations generally use the first and last letters, e.g. O C for OEOC (God), never the second letter alone. Even if the inscriptions were present, this would not be the proof of the invalidity of the carbon dating that they claimed. When I made an objection about their Greek, they responded that their interpretation was only a theory.

Isabel Piczek 'The concept of negativity through the ages, and the negative image on the Shroud'

Her presentation was most interesting. She said that although to a certain extent Byzantine and mediaeval artists did have some concept of negativity, this was not at all like the negative image visible on the Shroud.

John Jackson 'Scientific Considerations on the Shroud's Radiocarbon Date

Dare I say I was disappointed? Basically he just agreed with what Kouznetsov says, stating that his arguments are scientifically coherent.

Alan Adler 'Concerning the Side Strip on the Shroud of Turin'

He was most interesting and extremely entertaining. According to him the Shroud's so-called sidestrip has always been an original part of the cloth, and has never been added at any time. It is simply a tube through which a cord was inserted in order for the Shroud to be held up for public viewing. He also argued that the material that the carbon dating laboratories worked on in 1988 was not original to the Shroud, but instead was a piece of cloth that the de Charnys sewed on as a repair. It was invisible mending at its finest. However, as Adler felt bound to point out, both these points were rather speculative. He also added, in somewhat characteristically forceful language, that he didn't recommend Dr. Walter McCrone's recent book to anyone [for a review of this, see pp.28ff.].

Ian Dickinson 'New Evidence for the Image on the Shroud'

This was most curious. First of all he spoke about a Syriac manuscript, (Syriac MSS 235, fol.165a in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris), which apparently says that the image of Christ in Edessa was known before 521 AD. Then he claimed that he had recently seen the Veronica in the hidden chapel in St.Peter's. [For an article on this by the Editor, supplemented by some of Mark Guscini's further remarks on this, see pp.11-14].

Lennox Manton 'The Frescoes of Cappadocia'

This was a superbly illustrated presentation by retired dental surgeon **Lennox Manton** of his researches on the frescoes of Cappadocia and their relation to the Shroud as the Image of Edessa. Lennox's arguments are already familiar to many BSTS members thanks to the fine lecture he gave to the Society on 27 April 1994, also his excellent 20 page booklet *Byzantine Frescoes and the Turin Shroud*, inclusive of colour photos, as published by the Runciman Press, POB 86, Manly NSW 2095, Australia, in 1994.

Father Heinrich Pfeiffer 'Iconography of Christ's Passion and his Wounds in relation to the Shroud's probable route from Constantinople to Lirey'

According to **Father Pfeiffer**, the Shroud was in Germany before its historically-known emergence in France. He produced slides of supposedly Shroud-inspired crucifixes, basing his arguments chiefly on the 'very thin arms' visible on both. I did not find him very convincing.

Sister Blandina Paschalis Schlömmer 'The Veronica and the Shroud: The Two Original Images'

According to the Sister, the Manoppello veil is the original Veronica, a miraculous image of Jesus in its own right. She argued that it matches the face on the Shroud because the distances between the eyes and the nose are the same, etc. At that point I began to wonder what I was doing at the Symposium. I am sorry to be so negative and cynical, but that's really how I felt at that moment.

Rex Morgan 'The rôle of the Knights Templar from 1204 to 1353'

This was wonderful stuff, very well presented, with some powerful arguments for the Shroud being with the Templars, and a lot of information about Templecombe. He said the Shroud could possibly have been taken to England.

Professor Dan Scavone 'The influence of the Edessa Icon on the Legend of the Grail'

This was a very well-argued paper about the Mandyllion/Shroud being one and the same as the Holy Grail, but is very difficult to summarise [for further detail on Professor Scavone's arguments, see Newsletter no.44 - Ed].

Visit to Turin

After the Symposium many of us went on to Turin, but we could not even go to the Cathedral door, because it was all cordoned off. We were received by Cardinal Saldarini, who generously greeted us all individually. I was deeply impressed by him.