

Third Dallas International Conference on the Shroud of Turin

A Review: Discourse in Dallas

By Diana Fulbright

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW:

The expected highlight of this conference was the golden opportunity for a meeting of minds between American and European researchers, especially those affiliated with the Turin-based Centro.¹ These included the effusive **Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti, Prof. Pierluigi Baima Bollone, Prof. Bruno Barberis, Dr. Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, Prof. Karlheinz Dietz, and Prof. Nello Balossino.**

The venue of the conference was first-class. Simultaneous translation, English to Italian and Italian to English, was offered, but utilized only for Italian listeners, as all researchers opted to read, or have their papers read in English, a welcome gesture. **Susan Phillips**, translator at the Centro, assisted most ably.

But 5300 miles/8500 kilometers may have been too far for a bridge to be built—this time.²

Questions had arisen, primarily among certain American investigators, about the Centro's Restoration of 2002, when medieval patches were removed and a new backing cloth was attached. An hypothesis of medieval reweaving to explain the radiocarbon date gave rise to additional controversy.

Forewarned that “hard questions” might be put to the Turin delegation, conference organizers found themselves “between a rock and a hard place,” and reacted perhaps too zealously, prohibiting questions from the floor and stationing an armed³ security guard, who frequently stood inside the hall.

Unfortunately, there were too many missed opportunities for informal exchanges. For example, few Americans bought the discounted package for meals in the hotel, while nearly all the Europeans, not realizing they could find better and less expensive food in nearby restaurants, did. Thus were lost several daily chances to socialize, which might have diffused tensions.

Professor Baima Bollone, in his closing address, graciously found words to praise every presentation.

The concluding banquet, in the manner of seating arrangement, was disappointing. While most presenters and a few other conferees sat at a number of the customary round tables, a raised dais across one wall provided separate seating for the AMSTAR⁴ Board to the left, and the Centro delegation to the right. The Europeans had no choice in their seating, but regrettably, the placement spoke eloquently, if unintentionally. No détente in Dallas.

THE RESEARCH PAPERS:

All presentations had merit. Researchers offering new information included **Aldo Guerreschi**, who showed that the triangular burns of the 1532 fire were made by a solid object, not by molten silver. **Karlheinz Dietz** demonstrated that Geoffrey de Charny was no doubt dead prior to the first documented exhibition of the Shroud, and disputed the usual date given for that exhibition. **Mario Latendresse** analyzed small but significant image distortions which indicate, in his view, that the cloth was not completely flat when the image was formed. **Giulio Fanti** presented detailed support for his theory of image formation via corona discharge—an electrical discharge instigated by ionization of fluid surrounding a conductor. **José Luis Fernandez** proposed an ontological approach for avoiding futile discussions and comparisons, pointing out

1. Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia, Torino.

2. Earlier Dallas conferences--The Dallas Meeting of American Sindonology in November, 1998, and the October, 2001, International Conference--promoted research collaboration in a spirit of fellowship.

3. A bronze sign at the entrance to the elegant Adolphus Hotel read, “No Concealed Weapons Allowed.” Russ Breault wondered aloud, “Does that mean it's OK if they're openly holstered on the hip?”

4. American Shroud of Turin Association for Research, founded November, 1996.

that different researchers have used different protocols and different raw data for their conclusions, which therefore cannot reasonably be compared. **Isabel Piczek** drew our attention to similarities of the TS image to bas-relief in art, which “always curves out of a straight background.” A statue she created to illustrate this effect was on display in a nearby room. A copy of one of her stupendous murals hung in the back of the conference hall.

PRESENTATIONS OF THE DALLAS 2005 CONFERENCE, IN ORDER GIVEN:

Raymond N. Rogers,† Los Alamos National Laboratory, University of California – “**Studies on the Radiocarbon Sample from the Shroud of Turin**,” read by Thomas D’Muhala.

Karlheinz Dietz, Professor of Greek and Roman history at the University of Würzburg – “**Paralipomena⁵ on Geoffrey de Charny**.”

Pierluigi Baima Bollone, Centro Director and Professor of Forensic Medicine at the University of Turin – “**A Question of Artistic Anatomy**.”

Diana Fulbright, Director of Research, Shroud of Turin Center, Richmond, Virginia, and former Professor of Religious Studies – “**A Clean Cloth: What Greek Word Usage Tells us about the Burial Wrappings of Jesus**.”

Barrie Schwartz, Official Documenting Photographer for STURP and founder, editor and publisher of www.shroud.com – Video Program titled “**Ray Rogers In His Own Words**”

Gilbert Lavoie, M.D., Specialist in internal and occupational medicine – “**A Forensic Medical Study of the Shroud of Turin that will Present New Information to Further Illustrate the Complexity of Image Formation**.”

Dr. Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, Renowned expert on ancient fabrics preservation, of the Abegg Foundation;⁶ – “**The Turin Linen Cloth: Relationship between Carbon-dating and Conservation Observations in 2002**.”

Bruno Barberis, Professor of Mathematical Physics at the University of Turin – “**Ten Years of Important Events in the History of the Linen Shroud**.”

José Luis Fernandez, Associate Professor, Industrial Engineering School, Madrid Technical University – “**A Systematic Approach for Understanding the Image Formation on the Shroud of Turin**.”

Whanger, Mary, Vice President of CSST (Council for the Study of the Shroud of Turin) Durham, NC – “**The Impact of the Shroud Face Image on Art, Coins and Religions in the Early Centuries**.”

Dr. Mario Latendresse, Member of Science and Technology Advancement Team, FNOC, and “free member” of the Computer Sciences Department, University of Montreal – “**Evidence that the Shroud was not Completely Flat during the Image Formation**.”

Z. William Wolkowski, Professor of Physics at the Pierre and Marie Curie University, Paris – “**Hierarchy, Meaning & Coherence: a Transdisciplinary Cybersymposium**,” read by Isabel Piczek.

Dame Isabel Piczek, Renowned artist, muralist and sculptress – “**The Abstruse Bas-Relief Effect on the Shroud of Turin**.”

Dr. Gian Maria Zaccone, Director of the Turin Shroud Museum – “**The Shroud in History**.”

Dr. Mechthild Flury-Lemberg – Responses to questions posed by **Michael Minor** regarding possible misapprehensions about the Restoration of 2002. (This unscheduled discussion may have been prompted by Ray Rogers’ fervid remarks in the video shown Thursday evening.)

Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti, Professor at Sacred Heart University in Milan and close advisor to Cardinal Poletto;⁷ – **“From the Gospel to the Shroud.”**

August Accetta, M.D., Founder and Director of the Shroud Center of Southern California – **“Nuclear Radiation and the Shroud Head Image.”**

Kevin Moran, Optical engineer and multi-patented inventor – **“Image Properties of the Turin Shroud.”**

Joseph G. Marino and M. Sue Benford – **“Historical Support for a 16th-Century Restoration in the Shroud C-14 Sample Area,”** (Initially rejected, not listed, finally accepted and read in a special session Friday evening.)

Alan Whanger, M.D., President, CSST, and Professor Emeritus of Geriatric Psychiatry, Duke University. – **“Radiological Aspects of the Shroud of Turin.”**

Emanuela Marinelli and Maurizio Marinelli, Prodigious authors on the Turin Shroud and co-founders of the Collegamento Pro Sindone, Rome – **“Geography of the Sindinology.”**

Nello Balossino, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Turin. – **“The Shroud Image: Computer Processing for Hidden Information and Pattern Recognition.”**

Stephen Bolettieri, Artist and journalist– **“The First Photographic Revelation of the Shroud: ‘Accidental’ Discovery or Divine Providence.”**

Marcel Alonso, Petroleum engineer, Geosciences Expert Emeritus with Elf-Aquitaine,⁸ Paris – **“Role of Capillarity in the Image Formation Process.”** (Accepted, scheduled, listed, but not read!)

Giulio Fanti, Professor of Mechanical Engineering, University of Padua – **“Body Image Formation Hypothesis Based on Corona Discharge.”**

Aldo Guerreschi, Professional photographer and historian, who worked with Giuseppe Enrie for several years until the latter’s death. – **“Further Studies on the Scorches and the Water Marks.”**

Rev. Albert R. Dreisbach, Jr., Founder of the (now defunct) Atlanta International Center for Continuing Study of the Shroud of Turin – **“The Sudarion: What the Fourth Gospel Reveals about the Shroud and the Oviedo Cloth.”**

Giulio Fanti, – **“Evidence for Test Hypotheses about the Body Image Formation of the Turin Shroud”** (Initially rejected, then formally accepted, then rejected upon Dr. Fanti’s arrival in Dallas, but presented privately Saturday evening.)

“Discussion Period,” Sunday morning. **Prof. Balossino** and **Prof. Fanti** suggested a conference to be held in Turin focusing on an image said to be visible on the obverse of the cloth. In this scheduled Q&A session, only written questions submitted in advance were accepted. No follow-up questions were permitted. The session ended early.

5. “Omissions.”

6. The Abegg Foundation, near Bern, Switzerland, was established in 1961 as a museum and institute for the study and conservation of historic textile fabrics.

7. Severino Cardinal Poletto, Archbishop of Turin and Papal Custodian of the Holy Shroud.

8. Elf-Aquitaine deals with Petrochemicals Exploration and Production.

Back to the BSTS editor here: Not everyone would agree with the positive statements about the conference. A press release from conference attendee Daniel Porter stated, “You don’t treat full professors and published scholars this way.” Outspoken critic of the 2002 restoration work Bill Meacham, an archaeologist from the University of Hong Kong,

writing on the Shroud Science group on the Internet, called the conference a “total failure” and an “unmitigated disgrace.” Meacham was especially bothered by the armed guard, calling it an “outrageous, fascist manoeuver.” He claimed that the guard “glanced at me repeatedly” during Mechthild Flury-Lemberg’s talk.

After the conference came to an end, organiser Mike Minor declared that “the conference was a success and I believe we accomplished our goal, which was to give the much vilified Turin authorities a forum on this side of the pond to set the record straight about the 2002 Restoration.”

Argument and criticism were inevitable in the light of reactions to the work carried out in 2002, so full marks to Mike Minor, AM*STAR and the Centro Internazionale in Turin for organising the conference and giving everyone the chance to meet and talk with all involved.