

## Review of the Columbus Conference For the Shroud of Turin

By: Joseph W. Durham

Months had passed and the continual conversation on Shroud Science Group continued as preparation for the Shroud of Turin Conference was approaching quickly, which was to be held in Columbus, Ohio. Flight arrangements were being made, hotel reservations booked, and last minute preparations being made for the big event. For everyone, this conference meant something different. For some it was the breakthrough of new areas of research, the publication of new papers; the distribution of new literature; and for some, especially this author it was an opportunity to see friends which had not been seen in seven years.

Thursday was opening day for the conference. Upon arrival everyone was greeted by friendly faces from the past. Bags were hauled around the hotel lobby, the elevator continuing its journey up and down sending fellow Sindonologists to their designated floor. At three o'clock the arrivals became more consistent with the arrival of more and more speakers, and many new faces. Joe Marino and Sue Benford began to gather people in the ballroom, where the conference would be held, making sure everything was in its place. Four-thirty came and registration began, and body after body came marching into the conference room.

Giulio Fanti began setting up the "student posters," Richard Orareo set up two large portraits, one of the Shroud of Turin in a large photographic film, the second of a painting on cloth of the crucified Christ. For those that saw this were truly amazed at how beautiful it was, only a few realizing that the dorsal image was painted on the backside of this cloth. Six of Mr. Bernard Batt's posters were on display; Russ Breault was setting up sound equipment; and the Whangers were arriving, placing a few posters on display. Richard Orareo had previously purchased a VP-8 Image Analyzer and with the help of Kevin Moran, and Pete Schumacher they had it up and running and on display at the conference.

With opening remarks, the ballroom still a little rampant with guests arriving, and preparation continuing, it appeared that everything stopped for just a moment as the time had finally come for the opening. With the Olympics in progress we had all forgotten about the things that were going on around us, and focused our attention to the greatest relic of all times, the Shroud of Turin.

Rex Morgan took the stage with the opening address, *The Shroud: An Eternal Challenge*. This address struck the very hearts of those in attendance. Readdressing those issues from the past, opening minds to research and science. Mr. Morgan remarked that when a speaker with an Australian accent presents, it does not matter what he says, but how he says it. Mr. Morgan does a wonderful job presenting, and never disappoints when speaking on the Shroud.

Barrie Schwartz was next on the agenda to present with *A Tribute to STURP*. This was a fifteen-minute video, showing the great faces of the STURP team. With the lights off, and everyone facing the projector screen it was amazing to see those who had come before, bringing us to where we are in our research. As the video played and the music played softly in the

background, there were laughs, and tears of emotion. Many reached for handkerchiefs to dry their eyes as they saw their friends who had passed away some years ago.

With the adjourning of the opening day everyone gathered around, in their little groups and greeted their fellow researchers and friends. Cameras flashed, video was shot, and business cards were passed from one person to another; everyone was smiling from ear-to-ear.

Friday, August 15, 2008 our first speaker was to be Thomas D' Muhala, the former president of STURP. However, he was unable to attend. Our first speaker that morning was Joanna Emery. Joanna has studied the Shroud for many years, and has written for the BSTS as well. Her latest work was a children's book entitled *Journey of the Shroud*. Joanna was given the honor of reading Ray Rogers' paper *the Sudarium of Oviedo: A study of Fiber Structures*.

Peter Schumacher presented a historical, as well as moving paper on the *VP-8 Shroud Image Analysis, Impact, and History*. Peter began by telling of his earlier work and how he came to work with the VP-8. He spoke of how important the analyzer truly was to the research and what doors opened because of this breakthrough, leading to even more research and studies.

Kenneth Stevenson presented *My White Linen White Paper* to the audience. Ken spoke of his days working with the STURP team and how the Shroud had impacted his life. Later in the conference a gentleman had asked how far are we with the studies of the Shroud? How much information do we really know? Ken answered this question showing that there is always something more to come from the studies which have been done, and with research that has yet to be developed.

Two papers were then presented by John Dee German and Joseph S. Accetta, both members of STURP which was a treat for those in attendance that morning. Following these lectures was the first of many Q&A sessions, this one being with the members of the STURP team who were present. It was a joy to see these men together, and to hear their opinions and the information that they have gathered over the years. These men had so much to offer to crowd, it was truly an honor to hear them.

Raymond Schneider then presented his work that he had been doing with the use of Shroud images with computer programs. The purpose of his work was to show the study of the banding among other areas, by light and color contrast. Following was a paper by Paolo Di Lazzaro and then by T. V. Oomen regarding the dating of the coin images visible on the Shroud.

Alan and Mary Whanger then presented two papers. Photographic filters were passed out to everyone to show the image overlay technique.

Giulio Fanti presented four papers, two of which were his own, one a collaboration with Robert Basso, and the other a reading of a student paper by Barbara Faccini. Miss Faccini's paper states that there were different kinds of instruments used on the scourging of the man of the Shroud.

At eight o' clock Daniel Scavone, history professor, presented a paper entitled *History of the Holy Grail*. This was the final presentation for the evening, and it was the best historical presentation on the Holy Grail that this author has ever heard. Despite the greatness of the presentation it was a disappointment to see the lack of those in attendance for this event.

Saturday morning approaching the second floor of the hotel one could hear feet shuffling and the low sound of those talking. As one approached the ballroom area tables were filled with friends sitting and enjoying breakfast, talking about life, the Shroud, future travels, and the previous and upcoming lectures. There were many going through the conference program guess as to what the "special presentation – to be announced" meant. No one knew, and if they did, they were mum to the event. But, the revealing would have to wait.

Paul Maloney opened the morning with a paper whose title would ring in the ears of many, *What Went Wrong with the Shroud's Radiocarbon Date? Setting It All in Context*. Paul gives a history of those papers and ideas which have been presented in the past as to other ideas of what exactly went wrong with the dating. He spoke of where to go from the past and what we can learn for previous ideas, and how to test the next sample.

Directly following were two highly controversial articles presented by Joe Marino and Sue Benford. These papers were not controversial in that they were far-fetched, but that many do not hold to the ideas presented because of previous statements regarding the C-14 dating. Many do not believe that there is an 'invisible reweave' from what can be read. But the evidence is convincing nonetheless. Many slides were shown which caused many to cock their heads a little at the possibility that this theory may actually be correct.

Sue Benford then presented a paper entitled *Surface Chemical Analysis of the Shroud of Turin Identifies Discrepancies in Radiocarbon Dating Region*. From the abstract she writes, "Recent research reported new evidence suggesting the radiocarbon dating of the Shroud of Turin was invalid due to the intrusion of newer material in the sampling area." The gist is that Sue concludes that the testing of the 1988 C-14 dating was "manipulated during or after the 16<sup>th</sup> century" and they suggest that more testing on the Shroud should be granted in light of this report.

Barrie Schwartz then approached the podium as it was time for the special presentation which everyone had been waiting for. For a moment this author began thinking that Barrie had something that he was going to say, but it led to an introduction of Robert Villarreal of Los Alamos National Laboratory. With the presentation a round of applause was immediately given as everyone knew that this was going to be an important event, and all ears were attentive. Mr. Villarreal stated that indeed the samples which he had been given, those from the Rogers collection, had indeed been contaminated, and therefore the results could not be accurate.

Four papers were then read by Giulio Fanti. Following these reports Petrus Soons was introduced. Mr. Soons' work deals with digitizing the Shroud images, the Enrie photographs of 1931. He has worked along side many others to produce a hologram of the Shroud image. The image was portrayed many times during his presentation in slide form, but there were also three photographic films on display. These were to be seen using 3D glasses, and upon wearing these

the image took a much more realistic enhancement than the VP-8. This does not mean that the VP-8 is no longer important in the area of Shroud research; to say such would be a lie. The images of Soons are highly lifelike, coming directly from the Shroud itself. At the end of his speech he showed a small five-second video clip of the Shroud face in a negative, rotated from side to side giving all features to the man of the Shroud.

In light of Mr. Soons' work the next presentation was given by Avinoam Danin, Israel's leading botanist. Mr. Danin was presented with the holograms, mentioned above, in February of 2007. As Mr. Soons was looking at these images he had noticed what to be holes, or indentations in the forehead and in the cheek area. He contacted Prof. Danin, and it was confirmed that these were floral images. Prof. Danin has had much experience with the Shroud, and limits his studies to the botanical aspects. He has done much research in the studies, and holds true to his findings of the images of the floral imaging.

Jack Markwardt presented *Ancient Edessa and the Shroud: History Concealed by the Disciple of the Secret*. He discussed the research of Ian Wilson's theory of linking the Shroud with ancient Edessa. He states that the Shroud of Turin played an important role in bringing Christianity to Edessa, and the baptism of the king.

Daniel Scavone presented a paper entitled *On Besançon and Other Plausible Theories for the Shroud During the Missing 150 Years, 1204 to 1355*. Dan states the theories which have been presented in the past and concludes that Besançon has documents which state the location and happenings of the Shroud during these 150 years. There are some areas in the research where it is not clear and Dan clearly states those in his lecture.

Diana Fulbright was to present a paper entitled *Was Sixth-century Desertification a Factor in the Transfer of Relics from Palestine?* and *A Note on "the Servant of Peter."* Instead the presentation of a video by Barrie Schwartz entitled *Ray Rogers in His Own Words* was presented to the audience. It was interesting for many who never had the opportunity to know Mr. Rogers personally, including this author.

Following the presentations there was another open discussion focusing on the C-14 dating only. There was much discussion and some rather heated debates. Mr. Villarreal stood up, and remarked (paraphrase), "This is only going to work if we work as a team." How true those words are. Nothing can truly be accomplished unless a team is formalized and everyone put their ideas together and work with them. Giulio made many remarks with regarding the samples that he had. One individual then stated that Giulio should give a sample to Mr. Villarreal for him to test, and Giulio disappeared. Moments later, Giulio stood upon the platform once more and stated that he had for Robert three different samples.

With this breakthrough the audience stood and applauded, it was a large step in Shroud research. Giulio kindly turned over the three samples. Mr. Villarreal came to the platform, greeting Giulio taking each other's hand they stood, smiling from ear-to-ear and the cameras could not help but to take numerous photographs of this event.

Sunday morning, the posters began to come down and the images packed away for the close of the conference. The first presentation was *Jesus Christ, the Man of the Shroud, and Bilirubin* read by Robert Basso. The paper was written by Carol Goldoni.

Russ Breault then took the stage urging the people to become more involved with youth. Russ stated that he had formed a new web site, Shroud University ([www.shrouduniversity.com](http://www.shrouduniversity.com)), for students. As a tour was given of the site one could see the hard work and dedication that had been taken in making this site available. Russ made aware that he was working on contacting all of the colleges in the United States to approach them with the idea of placing a link on their web site to his web site. The purpose for this is not promotion, but to advance the message of the Shroud and to encourage research in numerous fields of study. The Shroud has not only been subjected to science but also to history and many other fields.

Raymond Schneider then presented a paper regarding student involvement, which led to an open forum regarding the 2002 restoration. The final paper was by Christopher Knabenshue ([www.shroudcrucifixion.com](http://www.shroudcrucifixion.com)) entitled, *The Tangible Emmanuel: How the Scriptures Shed Light on the Meaning and Presence of the Shroud of Turin*. Chris discusses why we should not be astonished at the Shroud's presence, but at the mysteries which are contained therein; those mysteries which we have yet to uncover.

The Columbus conference was indeed a success. There has already been talk about when there will be another conference, in Italy during the exposition, sooner, or later. Nothing has officially been stated regarding this area, and one does not believe that anything will come about for quite some time. Nonetheless, this conference was a true delight for anyone to have attended. This author has studied the Shroud from his youth, and grew up talking with many of the Sindonologists who have been mentioned, and many who were not. With the information that has been received in those years it was truly a delight to see all of the new faces emerge on the Shroud scene. Many people spent a great deal of time walking around the room introducing themselves one to another and finding out just who was attending and where their area of research had taken them.

As Rex Morgan stated in the opening address, it is time to prepare the way for the 'third wave' of Sindonologists, and it is the responsibility of the 'second wave' to do just that.