

IN MEMORIAM

PAUL DE GAIL, S.J.

20 November 1899 - 12 December 1983

I always think of Père de Gail as a soldier. Tall, big-boned, spare, he had a military bearing; indeed, a commanding presence which his inordinate modesty could not conceal. Of the many pictures of him which are stored in my mind—more vivid, perhaps, than any photo, had he ever permitted me to take even a single snapshot—there is one that is ever-so-faintly scumbled with premonition. He was leaving the house after we had dined together and I see him from the back; the curve of a wide-brimmed black hat shadowed the high collar of his long black cloak, which flared out from broad shoulders, somewhat stooped as he leaned on his cane to start cautiously down the steps.

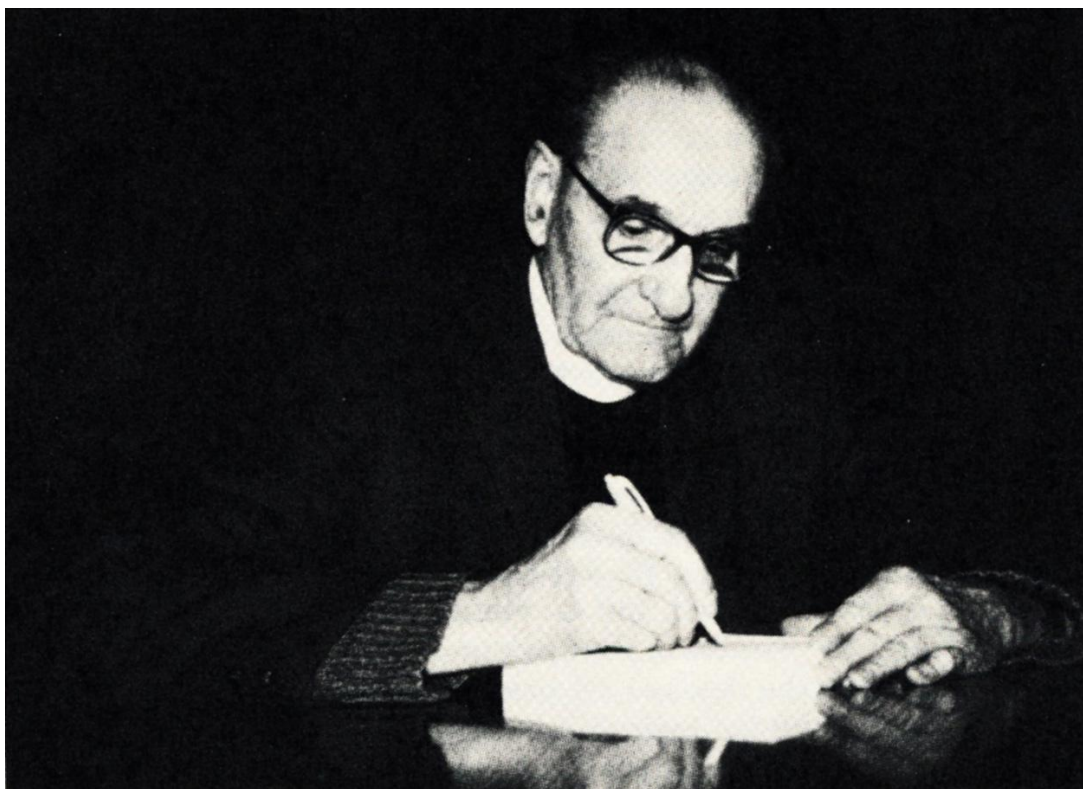
Of course, he had been a soldier, serving in both World Wars: in 1918, still a youth, he "manned the cannon" against the enemy; and in 1939, not long after he was ordained a priest, he was sent to the Front, now a Captain of Artillery. His brilliant conduct, especially at Dunkerque, was rewarded with the Croix de Guerre and the Legion d'Honneur.

But these were mere incidents in his life, imposed by the world of human turmoil. He was not the folkloric "old soldier" on whom a younger generation looks with great respect for his wounds, with gratitude for the sacrifices he made to preserve our freedom, and with a certain benevolence for one who no longer belongs to the world he helped to create. For Paul de Gail was a soldier of Christ, engaged in the ongoing battle which began on the Cross.

It would almost seem that Paul de Gail's enlistment in the military ranks of the Society of Jesus had been determined by factors present from the beginning of his life. He was born in Nantes into a family of the Alsatian nobility. His father was an officer of France's Etat Major, who served heroically throughout the war of 1914-1918; his mother a fervent Catholic who instilled in her children the duties of the faith.

Having completed his secondary studies at the Lycée of Montpellier, de Gail entered the Ecole Centrale of Paris whence he was graduated in 1920 as a civil engineer (Ingénieur des Arts et Manufactures). A career awaited him in his family's cotton industry; but a thunderbolt set fire to the establishment and its destruction sent the young engineer to seek work in Clermont-Ferrand, then Troyes, where he was active in ameliorating the workers' conditions.

It was there that he felt the call to a service higher than what the social plane offered, and in 1925 he entered the Jesuit novitiate at



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Florennes (Belgium). He was ordained in 1939, shortly before World War II broke out.

Returning to civil life, Paul de Gail was given various missions in France as an "interior missionary". But when a small reproduction of the Holy Shroud came to his notice, his real mission began: the mission for which we remember him today; for which he will be remembered in the future.

Like the saint whose name he bore, Paul de Gail fought the good fight to the end. His objective was to send out the message that Jesus-Christ is revealed by his Shroud.

When he gave his first lecture, in Bordeaux in 1950—before an audience of 800!—he had already studied and meditated the Holy Shroud for more than ten years. While carrying out the work assigned him by his Order, he continued to lecture, to do research, to study the Enrie photographs. In 1971 he was appointed chaplain in a Nursing Home at Compiègne. With more time now for writing, he began a series of important articles in *Stella Maris*. In 1975 he founded "Messagers de Turin; Les Amis de la Sainte Face". Through this association he distributed videotapes, pictures, brochures, etc., and the illuminated box with a transparency of the Holy Face. In September 1977 he published the first *Bulletin of Les Amis*, a 6-page, large format publication written by himself. The *Bulletin* appeared punctually every three months until #26, his last, dated December 1983, the month of his death.

His most important works are as follows:

Le Visage de Jesus-Christ et son Linceul, France Empire, Paris 1970 with a second edition in 1977;

Histoire Religieuse du Linceul du Christ: de Jerusalem à Turin, France Empire, Paris 1973;

Jésus-Christ révélé par son Linceul, Téqui, Paris 1976;

L'Homme au Divin Visage, a large album in illustration of the three versions of his lecture;

Cahiers du Linceul de Christ. Initiated in February 1983, the Notebooks were planned as a series with the intent of correcting false information spread to the public by a media interested only in sensational or scandalous "discoveries". The first and only Notebook to be published was a rebuttal of the "fallacious attacks" by Walter McCrone against the Shroud. (Reviewed in *Spectrum* #7)

His contributions to *Shroud Spectrum*:

"A Meditation on the Holy Face" (*Spectrum* #1, 1981);

"Paul Vignon", (*Spectrum* #6, 1983); and a review of *Verdict on the Shroud* by K. Stevenson and G. Habermas (*Spectrum* #7, 1983).

His writings are witness of the profound and scrupulous research he had conducted in the fields of science, history, art, theology ... Facts submitted to Cartesian logic and infused with contemplation. While his style was impassioned, trenchant, surprising, shot through with a penetrating wit—what Prof. Zeuli describes (pg. 32) as "his own distinctively provocative style"—there is nothing superfluous, nothing sentimental, nothing which does not flow from his own deepest convictions. A longtime friend of Père de Gail, Bernard Bouju, Doctor of Forensic Medicine, assessed his work as "implacable logic joined to a rigorous intellectual probity ... The authority of the man of science [was] served very effectively by the devouring zeal of the priest".

Paul de Gail insisted that by intrinsic evidence, the Shroud was its own proof of Christological authenticity, there for all to see with their own eyes; nor does it need a demonstration by X-rays or formulae comprehensible only to the scientist. Scientists "can extricate from the Holy Sheet a more profound knowledge of Jesus Christ and more complete information about the Passion of Christ—since this is precisely why Providence has given us the Shroud". Nevertheless, "Is it not time that research abandons the effort to 'prove' authenticity, which no one can dispute anymore?" Authenticity was made manifest by the simple photographic process, familiar, understandable and available to everyone. If the first photo, taken by Secondo Pia in 1898, revealed that the strange shadowy figure on the Cloth was a negative image, and the bloodstains were positive, the accuracy and definition of Giuseppe Enrie's photos (1931) provided faithful reproductions for reliable study. And for Paul de Gail, the photographic argument suffices: "No further proof is needed except the photos of Enrie"; "What science has told us, we have already known for fifty years"; "Science is breathless to find a proof which the Shroud refuses to give them... The most sophisticated science ...will always be incapable of telling if the Shroud of Turin is the Shroud of Christ; this is

not their role..."

It is not to the scientist that he addresses these remarks, for, to quote the members of STURP: "There is no [scientific] test for Jesus". But it is to a public whose mentality puts an exaggerated trust in the finality of scientific statements. It is a call to everyone to pay less attention to "analyzing the ink" on the Shroud and begin to read its message.

He was pleased to quote Rev. d'Armailhacq, S.J., who wrote, as long ago as 1935: "There are no longer two camps, for or against authenticity; there are those who know how to read and those who do not want to see". And Paul de Gail elaborates, recalling the incident recorded in the Gospels (Mt 13:54-58; Mk 6:1-6; Lk 4:14-30): The people of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, tempted him to show a sign, such as he had performed in Capharnaum. "The unique miracle that He performed at Nazareth", de Gail observes, "was to pass mysteriously through the raging crowds who wanted to throw him from the cliff."

It is true that de Gail's interpretations of some of the details on the Shroud image were at variance with the generally accepted interpretations. The same can be said of every dedicated sindonologist. Let us not attach importance to these errors, if errors they were; for they will eventually be sieved into oblivion. The good seed has already put forth a rare and hardy flower.

In his encomium to this indefatigable apostle of the Holy Shroud, Joseph Perrin, author of *Ecce Homo, ou le Saint Suaire de Turin*, movingly expresses his emotion as he watched a videotape from Paul de Gail. "That evening," he writes, "I truly believed in the Shroud of Turin. And from the very next day, my life was totally engaged in the propagation of these images ..." Perrin wonders how many people may have found their mission in life through Paul de Gail, as he did.

How many lives were instantly crystalized in the Reality of Christ? How many hearts were seared by a glance from those closed eyes of the Holy Face? How many souls were reached by Paul de Gail's proclamation of the message on the Shroud? How many?

God knows. One, at least, I can name:

DOROTHY CRISPINO

MONS. JOSE COTTINO (New Bedford MA, 10 May 1913—Turin, 31 August 1983), was a familiar and friendly figure to the American scientific team for his assistance and sympathetic response to their needs in 1978, when he was General Manager of the Exposition of the Shroud and of the examinations which followed. But his role in sindonology goes back much farther than that memorable period.

His first service to the Holy Shroud was during the Exposition of 1933, when he was still a seminarian. Ordained a priest in 1937, he

passed his life in a great variety of ministries, interrupted only during World War II when, serving as military chaplain on the Albanian Front, he was deported to Germany.

Mons. Cottino was Vice President of the Special Commission (1969-1973) which was formed to examine the condition of the Linen (a subject on which he published an article) and to study the possibility of eventual tests and research; which, as we know, took place five years later. He was also Vice President of the committee in charge of the first television showing of the Shroud, 23 November 1973, a program that was introduced by a message delivered by Pope Paul VI. This event was described by Mons. Cottino in an article in a Turin paper.

He contributed to various periodicals over the years, including the weekly newspaper *La Voce del Popolo*, which he directed for two decades.

As *Sindon* wrote of him (Dec. 1983): "He was not a man of easy enthusiasm, but he was open to new initiatives when he saw clearly the details". His manner was, indeed, reserved; but he gave proof of a keen sensitivity toward others and a perception emanating from an intense interior life nourished on knowledge and love of Christ and of the Holy Shroud.

D.C.

JOHN ARTHUR ROBINSON (1919-1983), Bishop in the Church of England from 1959-1969, New Testament scholar, don at Cambridge University for most of his life, was the cause of much radical theological discussion with his 1963 book *Honest to God*. The thesis required a reinterpretation of the framework of Christianity for modern man who has now come of age. In 1977 he involved himself on the study of the Holy Shroud and in 1978 he gave an address at the Turin International Scientific Congress. He then said that his natural scepticism concerning the Shroud was shaken precisely because no forger starting with the New Testament accounts would have created the Holy Shroud! He ended his address with an admission that being able to say "It is the Lord" was no mere blessing but a responsibility. Each time he spoke on television thereafter he held to the phrase "It is not for the proponents of the Shroud to defend. It is for the opponents to prove".

May he rest in peace.

CHARLES FOLEY