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INAUGURAL LECTURE

Abstract

This report faces the problems about the Shroud on the level of the relation science-faith and above all the relation with theology and the Catholic Church Teaching.

It calls upon a double clearance of the Shroud-theme: both by the scientists, who should recognize the internal authenticity of the object, and by the theologians that should pay attention to the message, also theological, of the Shroud image.

Main part of the report is just the analysis of the double statute, scientific and religious, of the Shroud. One analyzes the problems of the origin, the authenticity, the certitude level and the problem of the identification. It results that the Shroud image is *acheiropoietos*, that is not made by human hand, it is authentic, with a more than sufficient certitude level, and that the Man who appears on its frontal and dorsal image and with the imprint of 700 wounds is Jesus of Nazareth. From the religious statute point of view, one claims that the Shroud is an icon and a relic to venerate, it is a sign rich of message, it is the testimony of a Presence.

In the third chapter one explains some consequences of that double statute. One asks for a new awareness by the scientific world about the Shroud enigma: the detachment without contact by the body from the wrapping of the sheet and the physical mechanism of the image formation, happened as if a light and energy lightning was emitted by the corpse.

On a religious level one proposes: its study, catechetical use, veneration and contemplation.

The fourth chapter explains three Shroud problems in the present ecclesial context: from the pastoral point of view, one contests the “minimalism” of the Turinese persons in charge who reduce the Shroud to an icon, from the ecumenical relations point of view one points out the necessity that all the Christian people have an attitude of consideration and veneration for this Christ’s funerary sheet. As for the Teaching, one reminds the deep veneration of John Paul II and asks for an attitude of respect by the Church for all the scientific results on the Sheet and not only of the radiocarbon test.

The chapter about the relation with theology, corroborates the accessory character of the Shroud that doesn’t touch the substance of the act of faith, the refusal of any fetishism, one lists the theological “calls” that come from this relic and one faces the problems about the “witness” that the Shroud bears of the Resurrection, specifying that the relic could never be considered an “evidence” of the Resurrection.

The last chapter presents the double provocation of the Shroud to science and faith (the one weak, rationalized and disembodied) to end showing the Shroud like “Jonah’s sign for our time”, as well as mysterious, symbolic and real actualization, in full image civilization, of the Messianic sign: “Then they will look on Me whom they pierced”.