

EDITORIAL - ON CUTTING ONE'S CLOTH . . .

Despite the lateness of this *Newsletter*, at the time of going to press all the anticipated imminent moves towards carbon dating and other testing of the Shroud are still in a state of flux. Disagreements continue between Turin and Rome, with Cardinal Ballestrero and Professor Gonella anxious to press ahead, while the Vatican's Professor Chagas continues to present difficulties. A decision over the exact number of samples to be taken has still to be resolved, and to compound the problems, the American STURP group is still in need of a very substantial amount of funding. For those of us who, for so many years, have strenuously urged the carbon-dating all these are perhaps little more than one further round of frustration to bear. But the prevailing danger is that if, by next Easter, there are still no results from any carbon dating to be announced - because the test still has not been carried out - then public credibility both in the Shroud and the openness of the Catholic Church cannot other than begin to drift into a serious decline.

Nor would it be wise for the carbon-dating to be held without at least some of the other testing work already proposed by the American STURP and ASSIST groups, and by us here in Britain. As Bill Meacham of Hong Kong has so cogently argued (*Newsletter* no. 14), whatever its results carbon dating should not be considered the be-and-end-all arbiter on the Shroud. Fresh microanalytical work on the Shroud's image and blood marks, combined with textile and similar analyses, are equally needed to be carried out and their results assessed in parallel to any carbon dating findings. But such work does not need a cast of thousands, and hard though it may be to disappoint enthusiastic would-be researchers on some of the more obscure points of interest, it may behove those with the most ambitious and expensive plans to heed the time-honoured maxim to cut one's cloth according to one's means.

In all the circumstances, it is unavoidable recalling the parallel of the Roman soldiers parcelling out and casting lots for Christ's garments at the foot of the cross (John 19: 23). A forthcoming novel on the Shroud, by Ray Leonard, features a priest secretly arranging the carbon dating of a piece of the Shroud, then at the last moment aborting the results on the grounds that God should not be put to the test. One cannot help but wonder whether this, after all, may be the true wisdom - for all the howls of protest it would undoubtedly raise . . .

EDITOR'S NOTE

My personal apologies for the lateness and more limited content of this *Newsletter*, mainly due to the disruption of my working schedule this summer caused by two unexpected spells of hospitalization, followed by the need for a house-move, all now successfully achieved. Please note that all future contributions to this *Newsletter* should be sent to my new address: Ian Wilson, Ground Floor Apartment, Sneyd Park House, Goodeve Road, Bristol BS9 1PW, tel. 0272 687031.