

LETTERS

While, despite Professor Hall, the Society has not made a habit of taking refuge in miracles, members may well be interested in the following letter received from the Revd. Philip Elston, RD, AKC, MA, RNR, The Royal Naval School, Farnham Lane, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 1HQ:

I have followed with considerable interest the recent investigations into the dating of the Turin Shroud which has been the focus of attention amongst many of the students at the Royal Naval School during the past two or three years. My reason for writing to you in the wake of the formal scientific conclusion earlier this month [October 1988] is to relate a personal encounter with the Shroud that occurred earlier this year.

During the past twelve months I have been under medical investigation at St. Richard's Hospital, Chichester for a liver disorder. In the course of these enquiries I have been given a rigorous examination at the London Hospital for Tropical Diseases (having been on mission service in Central Africa for seven years) but up to the present time neither St. Richard's nor the London Hospital have been able to identify the nature of the disorder.

However, the symptoms of the disorder included an enlarged and hardened liver and a more or less permanent pain in the region of the liver which I had been obliged to live with for a very long time.

About halfway through Lent this year I developed an overwhelming conviction that I should use the Shroud - to be more specific, the face on the Shroud - to counteract the pain I was experiencing. Furthermore it was borne upon me that I should tape the image over the area of the liver on Palm Sunday and leave it in place until Easter Day - and that I should not mention this to anyone (including my wife).

Accordingly I reduced a large-scale photograph of the face on the Shroud to proportions that would enable me to tape it on to my abdomen on the morning of Palm Sunday.

Throughout Holy Week I experienced a burning sensation in the area of the liver such that I was sorely tempted to remove the image but did not do so. On Easter Day I removed the unusual dressing. During the next two or three days the persistent pain I had suffered lessened and finally disappeared, and at the time of writing has not returned.

I ought to mention in passing that ever since the medical investigation commenced last October I have not been given so much as an aspirin let alone any sophisticated drugs to treat my liver condition. The fact remains that whereas a year ago I was subject to considerable discomfort on this account, today I am pain-free as far as my liver disorder is concerned.

As a fairly normal Anglican without any hang-ups about relics - one way or the other - I find myself having to acknowledge that whatever the carbon 14 dates may indicate, as far as I am concerned the case for the prosecution remains unproven whereas the case for the defence still has a lot of mileage.