

A NEW FINDING

From a Book of Hours of 1486 - a hitherto unrecognised Christ image inspired by the Shroud - by Ian Wilson

Italian scholar Don Luigi Fossati SDB has most admirably catalogued the numerous artists' copies of the Shroud that were made during the 16th and 17th centuries [see his articles in *Shroud Spectrum* nos. 12 & 13, Sept/Dec. 1984] But before the so-called Dürer copy made in 1516 there has seemed to be only one European artistic rendition of the Shroud - the Lirey medallion showing an exposition of the Shroud linked to the arms of Geoffrey I de Charny and his wife Jeanne de Vergy - dateable either to around the time of Geoffrey's death in 1356, or definitely not later than Jeanne de Vergy's death in the 1390s.

However recently my attention became drawn to a highly important and indisputably Shroud-related manuscript illumination of the intervening years that appears hitherto to have gone unnoticed by those interested in the Shroud. In the Musée Condé, Chantilly's *Les Très Riches Heures*, the magnificently illuminated Book of Hours commissioned from the Limbourg brothers by John Duke of Berry between 1411 and 1416, there is a second section of the manuscript which came to be illuminated much later in the century when the then still incomplete Book of Hours had passed to Duke Charles I of Savoy, a descendant of the Duke of Berry. This time the illuminator was the French miniaturist Jean Colombe of Bourges, and among the first pages Colombe contributed to the volume was a Christ as Man of Sorrows [see p.19, overleaf], flanked by patron Duke Charles on the left, and on the right the young bride whom Charles had married in 1485, Blanche de Montferrat, daughter of the Marquis of Saluzzo.

As an artistic theme Christ as Man of Sorrows was by this time already well-established both in the Byzantine world and in western Europe, but the point of interest of this particular illumination is that upon close inspection the wounds of the Christ can be seen to be Shroud-related. Not only are the hands crossed in the Shroud manner and Christ's body peppered with most-Shroud-like scourge-marks, particularly telling are long streams of blood as from the nail-wounds that are depicted running down the front of the forearms. The date of the illumination cannot be later than 1490, since Duke Charles I died in that year, and it would seem to be 1486, since otherwise Colombe is virtually continually recorded as present in Bourges, and acts of June 3 1486 show Charles I signing in Turin, in the presence of the artist, a document retaining "maître Jean Collumbe"'s satisfactory services.

Another indication that Colombe made a special journey to the Savoy domains to carry out the work is the fact that according to art experts the fairy-tale-style castle visible in the background, between Christ and Duke Charles, is most probably Ripaille on the banks of Lake Lemman/Geneva, with the town of Geneva visible in the distance. Ripaille was a favourite retreat of the Dukes of Savoy, the first Duke, Amadeus VIII, having retired there back in 1434, reminding us that this was a time when the Savoys moved regularly between one of their castles and another, taking the Shroud with them. On 2 June 1488, for instance, Jean Renguis, the clerk to the Savoys' mobile chapel, was paid two écus for to journeys he made taking the Shroud from Turin to Savigliano, about 20 miles south of Turin. Jean Colombe's miniature, which occurs as part of the Hours of the Cross, was almost certainly intended in part to mark Duke Charles's

marriage to Blanche, which had happened in 1485, and in part to mark their devotion to the great relic of Christ's Passion in their care, it being particularly notable that he chose to link the Savoys' prayerful portraits with this particular scene.

While working for the Savoys to create his miniatures Colombe was most likely invited to attend one of the special private showings of the Shroud that would have taken place among family and friends (such showings, for instance, becoming traditional at ducal weddings), and he based his Man of Sorrows on that experience. After Duke Charles I's untimely death in 1490, the still youthful Duchess Blanche (who became known as Bianca of Savoy), is recorded as showing the Shroud in the presence of the secretary to the Duke of Mantua on Good Friday, 1494. It is also to be noted that Colombe contributed to the same Book of Hours a unique interior view of the Christmas Mass being celebrated in the Savoys' chapel at Chambery.

To further counter recent allegations that there was a suspicious 'gap' in the Shroud's history between 1453 and 1494 there follows a calendar of the Shroud and its owners for around and a little beyond those years. Most of this information has always been available from the sources quoted in my book *The Turin Shroud*, and from the bibliography given at the end of this chronology. But hopefully the calendar may be of some interest in its own right because of the remarkable misfortunes which befell the leading male members of the Savoy family during the first six decades of their ownership of the Shroud.

Jean Colombe's seemingly Shroud inspired miniature of Christ as Man of Sorrows, flanked by Duke Charles I of Savoy (1485-90), and his wife the Duchess Bianca, formerly Blanche de Montferrat. From folio 75 of the *Très Riches Heures* of John, Duke of Berry, Musée Condé, Chantilly.