

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

From Italy:

Feminine DNA on the Shroud?

Italian scientists have claimed that the Shroud's 'bloodstains' carry traces of feminine as well as masculine DNA. This was the 'surprise' announcement arising from recent study of two small samples taken by Italian participants in the incisive examination of the Shroud conducted by the American STURP scientists in 1978. According to an 'exclusive' report in an August 1995 issue of the Italian journal *Chi*, the discovery arose because Italian forensic medicine specialist **Prof. Pierluigi Baima Bollone** wanted to pursue further his long-standing assertion that the 'blood' on the Shroud is of the group AB. Bollone had noted the 'blood' on Spain's Sudarium of Oviedo to be of this same group, and decided that a DNA analysis might reveal further parallels.

The analysis of the Shroud DNA was carried out at the Institute of Legal Medicine, Genoa under the direction of **Prof. Marcello Canale**. According to Prof. Canale: "We received two extremely thin 1.5 cm. length threads derived from the edges of the cloth, approximately from the region of the man of the Shroud's feet. We have extracted the DNA present on these tiny threads, and have amplified this with a chain reaction that allows us, via a particular enzyme, to keep on replicating the DNA an infinite number of times. It is a method that can be used even in the case of a single cell ... The DNA chain is very long, and we are able to identify very small sectors representing individual characteristics which can ultimately enable us to identify the individual from whom they derive. With regard to sexual characteristics, we have positive indications for both genders, but much more positive for the masculine one. ... It would seem that there has been some form of contamination, as we cannot suppose that the individual represented on the stains belonged to both sexes." As commented by journalist Luciano Regolo of *Chi*:

The masculine and feminine DNA can also be found on the Sudarium of Oviedo, as a result of which it might be hypothesised that Jesus was bestowed with feminine as well as masculine characteristics by his divine Father. "Questions such as these are beyond our competence" says Prof. Canale. "But science might well explain such contamination as due to both cloths having been woven by women, also to women playing a part in the vicissitudes both underwent in the course of their history." In the case of the Shroud, for instance, it was a woman, Margaret de Charny, who bequeathed the Shroud to Duke: Louis of Savoy in 1453. Following the fire which severely damaged the Shroud at Chambery, it was Poor Clare nuns who repaired it. Again, in 1978, two nuns were among those who directly handled the linen. As observed by the Institute's Director "The slightest thing, a single cell, a little skin, perspiration itself, these contaminations ... can give a distorted result."

[Based on article "Sindon, a Mystery called Woman" by Luciano Regolo, *Chi*, August 1995.]

From Turin:

Cardinal Saldarini: Thoughts on the Shroud expositions of AD 1998 and 2000

Following the announcement of the Shroud expositions to be held in 1998 and 2000, **Cardinal Saldarini** of Turin held a second press conference on the Shroud in early October, 1995. The Cardinal's frank, forthright, and deeply spiritual responses to interviewers' questions were reported in *Avvenire* on Saturday October 7. A literal translation from the Italian was very kindly made by **Fr. Paolo Caporali**, SDB, a friend of the late Fr. Peter Rinaldi, and passed to the BSTS via **Don Luigi Fossati** of Turin, Ilona Farkas of Rome, and our good friend **Isabel Piczek** of Los Angeles.

Fr. Caporali's translation has here been adapted in order to convey the Cardinal's meaning in the best possible English, and any infelicities in this adaptation are entirely the fault of your Editor.

Interviewer: 'Your Eminence, how much importance do you attach to the radiocarbon dating of the Shroud?'

Cardinal Saldarini: Scientists from all over the world had repeatedly urged for the Shroud to be tested by the radiocarbon dating, and after careful deliberation the Holy See gave its consent. The preliminary specialist discussions were conducted between the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and those whom the Pope's official custodian of the Shroud, at that time Cardinal Ballestrero, entrusted to act on his behalf. Three particularly well-qualified laboratories were chosen, the necessary samples were cut from the Shroud, and assigned to the laboratories. The Church authorities thereupon effectively withdrew from the process. But regrettably the laboratories did not entirely keep to the conditions that they had accepted. This was particularly so with regard to confidentiality and the divulging of their findings. Despite this Cardinal Ballestrero felt that the substance of their findings ought to be released, and with Vatican agreement he made public what had been imparted to him.

With reference to these results, it is perfectly reasonable for an assessment to be made relating to scientific findings. When unbiased and professionally conducted findings have been arrived at, it is normal for these to be trusted, pending whatever confirmations or corrections may subsequently follow. The Church authorities have quite deliberately remained aloof from the heated debate that followed the results' publication, though they have urged the scientists involved to pay special attention to any clues from which some form of proof might ultimately be derived.

Interviewer: What is your Eminence's opinion regarding recent 'discoveries' concerning the Shroud, particularly those claiming the presence of feminine DNA on the Shroud linen?'

Cardinal Saldarini: However intriguing the claimed 'discoveries' might seem, they raise problems with regard to whatever material from the Shroud might have been used for the experiments. As stated at a recent press conference, no samples have been taken from the Shroud since 1988. So how can there be any certainty that the tests were carried out on linen genuinely from the Shroud? The DNA findings may well have been based on minute samples which were taken, with official consent, in 1978. But the presence of feminine DNA on these, even if it is accepted, cannot be regarded as a significant finding. All it shows, as already well known from

the Shroud's history, is that the Shroud has been handled by a variety of people. In 1534, for example, it was for two weeks in the care of the Poor Clare nuns of Chambery, in order for them to repair the damage caused by the 1532 fire. To pinpoint any particular DNA on the Shroud as definitely deriving from the crucifixion would be a very long shot indeed.

Interviewer: What are your plans for the involvement of the city of Turin and the Italian church in the expositions of AD 1998 and 2000?

Cardinal Saldarini: The expositions will be based on the Shroud's religious significance, and on its history. Evident on the sacred linen are images of extraordinary power redolent of the sublime mystery of Jesus's redemption of our sins, particularly with regard to his Passion. The showings are intended to supplement, for today's world, the message of salvation that can only come from the Lord Jesus and from his love. Since this message is one that has fruitfully produced conversions and saintliness over the centuries, we will be asking the Lord for this same bounty with regard to the showings of the Shroud.

Interviewer: How do you see the two expositions within the context of the Jubilee Year 2000 and the "Coining of the Third Millennium"?

Cardinal Saldarini: The message of the Shroud may be part of the "new evangelisation" to which the Pope has frequently referred. I am convinced that it has a particular 'modernity' because of its nature as a visual image that can be studied deeply. In no other period of history has there been such power for images to be transmitted carrying information and influencing human behaviour. Pastoral work over the last few years has readily confirmed people's sensitivity to the message of the Shroud as a 'Silent Witness'.

Interviewer: For us human beings of the year 2000, what message does the Shroud convey? Why is it that today so many efforts are being made to destroy the Shroud's credibility as a true and authentic relic?

Cardinal Saldarini: I will try to sum up the message of the Shroud in just a single sentence: 'In all truth, He could not love us more.' Here I am obviously referring to Jesus, and to the fact that the gospel narrative of his Passion is the same that we see in visual form when we pause to 'read' the sorrowful saga written on the Shroud's linen. This makes the continuing antipathy towards the Shroud all the more difficult to understand. Perhaps it springs from a fear of idolatry, or from an unwillingness to accept any message based on such physical suffering. The intensity of the hostility towards the Shroud's authenticity may well be based on simple misunderstandings. For many the Shroud's religious value lies in it being the cloth that historically wrapped Jesus's body after this had been brought down from the cross. Some therefore see the scientific arguments against this as demanding that any further veneration of the Shroud should cease. But there is no justification for this. The scientific research into the issue of the Shroud's authenticity is very far from concluded. All other considerations aside, the image that looks out at us from the Shroud undeniably reflects the suffering and Passion of Jesus as told in all four gospels, particularly that of St. John. Since to this day there remains no consensus on how the image was formed, blithely to brand the Shroud a fake makes absolutely no sense. The very fact that it exists among us, and for centuries has deeply influenced Christian piety, underlines the responsibility that we bear towards this gift of God, even as the modern Church of today.

Interviewer: Your Eminence, looking beyond the arguments that will undoubtedly rage while the expositions are awaited, what does the image on the Shroud mean to you as an individual?

Cardinal Saldarini: If in all truth, the man-God loved me so much that He took upon Himself such sufferings, I can only believe that I need to love daily and unceasingly in like measure. And since He loves all humanity the same way, my response to that love has to be a continuous, daily giving of myself to all humanity. I pray that the Lord allow that this should be realised, beginning with my own life."

Shroud Symposium to be held in San Marino

The **Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia**, Turin, the world's most senior Shroud group, and closest to Cardinal Saldarini on all matters relating to the Shroud, have announced that they are to hold a Shroud Symposium in San Marino, the tiny independent republic S.W. of Rimini, Italy, the weekend of 16-17 February. No further details of this had become available at the time of this Newsletter going to press, but any enquiries can be addressed directly to the Centro at Via S. Domenico 28, 10122 Torino, Italy.

Did England's King Edward I Touch the Shroud while in the Holy Land?

BSTS member **Sister Francis Agnes Onslow**, O.S.C. of the Convent of Poor Clares, Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, has very kindly drawn our attention to an apparent reference to the Shroud that she came across while consulting Edmund Waterton's *Pietas Mariana Britannica* published in 1879. In the course of discussion concerning real and sanctified relics (the latter being ones which have touched the former), Waterton mentioned on p.86: 'In the Wardrobe books of the 28th year of Edward I [i.e. c.1300 AD] is mentioned 'unus pannus linteus qui tetigit sudarium Christi [a piece of linen cloth which touched the Shroud of Christ].' Her curiosity aroused, Sister Agnes consulted a book on the Crusades and, in her own words, 'found that Edward, when prince of England, went to the Holy Land with a small contingent in 1271. A Knight Templar of Tyre describes his visit, how he led a raid near Acre, taking Templars and Hospitallers with him, made friends with Hugh of Lusignan, King of Jerusalem, and returned to England 1272.' If what we now know as the Turin Shroud was kept by the Templars at Acre at that time, prior to their withdrawal to France, was this the occasion on which the future king Edward I obtained this secondary relic?

Of course there remain far too many imponderables, but as modestly remarked by Sister Agnes 'I thought it might make a small note in the Newsletter.'

Exhibition of First Century Textiles at London's British Museum

An exhibition of early Jewish textiles from Masada, mostly dating from the first century AD, was recently staged at London's **British Museum**, thus providing an excellent opportunity for anyone familiar with the Shroud weave to study a variety of fabrics indisputably from the very

century in which Jesus lived. The fabrics were a selection from some 3000 textile fragments excavated by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem between 1963 and 1965. They derive mostly from clothing worn the Jewish Zealots who, following the collapse of the First Jewish Revolt, held out against the Romans at Masada, only to commit mass suicide in AD 73, when the Romans' capture of the fortress became inevitable. 80% of the fabrics were of sheep's wool, with linen and goat and camel hair comprising the remaining 20%. According to the British Museum's accompanying leaflet: '... linen was used for underwear, household cloths and utilitarian objects, goat and camel hair for sacks, mats and animal equipment. The good quality of the textiles reflects a high standard of spinning and weaving. Some textiles were both spun and woven at Masada - spindle whorls and loom weights were found among the siege debris. Some of the wool and goat-hair may have come from animals pastured on the site. Wool with S-spun yarns in warp and weft threads were probably made locally. Those which are weft-faced but have Z-spun warp and weft yarns were probably imported from the northern Mediterranean. The textiles with varied spin direction and balanced 2.2 twill weaves may have come to Masada with Roman soldiers from Celtic and Germanic Europe. The weaving techniques used were mostly simple: tabby, twill, knotted pile (rugs and cloaks) and sprang (hair-nets). Most of the textiles were woven to size and were finished with the minimum of sewing.'

With regard to the conservation of the fragments, the British Museum leaflet noted: 'The textile fragments when discovered were crumpled and covered by hardened dust which hid their structure and colour. The first step in their conservation is to rehydrate the fragments by gentle humidification, after which they can be unfolded. The material and colour then become visible. Next, as much dirt as possible is removed with a tiny, specially designed vacuum cleaner. The fragments are then gently washed in de-ionised water, the conservator using a very soft brush to remove as much of the remaining dirt as possible. Finally the fragments are left to dry naturally on blotting paper.'

From the U.S.A.

The Index for Which Your Editor Waited 18 Years!

When my book *The Turin Shroud* was being prepared in 1977/8, I was living in Bristol, England and my publishers Doubleday, who had commissioned the book, were in New York. Faxes had not been invented; the budget was tight; and there was a race against time to have the book ready ahead of the 1978 exposition. As a result someone in New York decided it was best to do without an Index. This meant that the U.K. edition (which used the same type-setting), and every subsequent edition appeared without an index, a very regrettable deficiency which the late Group Captain Cheshire was not alone in pointing out at the time. Now **Ms. Lisa Barnett**, a student of **Professor Dan Scavone**, at the University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, Indiana, USA, has most kindly prepared an Index (suitable for all U.S. and UK. and Commonwealth hardback editions), for which this Editor, for one, is duly grateful. Anyone in the U.K. who would like a copy should send a large SAE and £1 in postage stamps to the General Secretary. In the case of overseas orders, for convenience please add \$3 or sterling equivalent to your subscription renewals, but no S.A.E. is required. Any profits will go to BSTS funds.