

MAJOR SHROUD DOCUMENTARY SHOWN ON AMERICAN TELEVISION

*On the night of the 1st of April an hour-length television documentary "The Mysterious Man of the Shroud", presented by actor **Hector Elizondo** and produced by **Terry Landau** and **Piero di Pasquale**, was screened throughout the USA by the CBS television network.*

Isabel Piczek reports on this:

Thanks to the talent and effort of producer Terry Landau, and proper financial backing, this proved a truly professionally produced programme on the Shroud, and overall a very fine achievement indeed .

Respectful of the person of Christ, the programme left the door open for further discussions on authenticity, even though subtly emphasizing more the anti-authenticity arguments than the pro-authenticity ones. However, in spite of its excellence, some of its arguments against authenticity need to be addressed. Were these correct? Were they thoroughly well-researched? I will only touch here upon the main areas of the controversies presented.

The most serious of these was a suggestion - not denied anywhere in the programme - that the blood samples taken from the occipital area of the Shroud by **Professor Riggi** in 1988 had been removed "in the presence of the official caretakers". This gave the impression that **Cardinal Ballestrero**, custodian of the Shroud in 1988, had either directly approved this removal, or at least tacitly allowed it. This cannot be left without explanation, for it suggests a discord or contradiction between the policies of the two cardinals, Ballestrero and Saldarini, following each other as custodians of the Shroud.

If, as Cardinal Saldarini's own words indicate in the program, he did not give permission for Shroud blood samples to be released to anyone, then it is unlikely that his predecessor would have authorised such samples' original removal. For there would have been no purpose in any such removal. Between 1988 and now neither of the Shroud's custodian cardinals, as executors of the policies of the Holy See, have indicated any immediate intention to continue with scientific tests, especially not on blood samples. There have to be some serious questions, therefore, concerning Professor Riggi's taking of the blood samples. As the innocent recipients of these samples Drs. **Garza Valdes**, **Mattingly** and **Tryon** [see *Newsletter* no 43, pp.4-8], all featured in the programme, cannot be considered to bear any responsibility. They were misled. But this now affects possibly important research, for the authentic origins of the samples can no longer be proven. The Church, as Cardinal Saldarini stated, cannot accept the results of the tests, even if they may add to the authenticity arguments. This was not clear to many of the viewers of the programme.

The second area we have to debate regarding the programme is its pollen research, which was scientifically poor. **Uri Baruch**, quoted in the show, stated that pollen exposed to the elements will decompose, and could not be found on the Shroud, which itself was exposed. However to my personal knowledge, art restorers often report old pollen grains

on antique paintings on canvas, the grain's toughness often proving a nightmare from the restoration point of view. Pollen experts also report that pollen grain is very tough, and I quote "Palynologists use hydrochloric acid to clean the pollen in order to study them under the microscope". According to the same report **Aaron Horowitz**, Israel's leading palynologist, found pollen thousands of years old in wet sediments in the Sea of Galilee. Now if pollen does not disintegrate in a wet environment, surely it should survive in a dry one?

The third difficulty arises with the textile research presented in the programme. **Paul Maloney**, a Near-Eastern archaeologist, reports that the late **Yohanan Aharoni** discovered in the 'Cave of Horrors' a 2:1 twill in an "emphatically Jewish context". He also reminds us of Syrian twill known for many years with a similar weave. We also have reports of mummy wrappings of 3:1 twill, just like the Shroud. Therefore, one cannot say that the weave, as used in the Shroud, did not exist east of Europe.

The historical study presented in the programme showed a bias in favour of the C14 dating of the Shroud. It tried to prove that the documented beginning of the Shroud, and the date of the carbon 14, fall precisely into each other, naming that date as 1350. In spite of the carefully given historical description of the Shroud by **Dr. Daniel Scavone**, interviewed in my hearing, the programme found the dates and documents prior to 1350 purely hypothetical.

As has been pointed out by Ian Wilson in the course of correspondence, why should the obscure date of 1350 (actually circa 1355), given in the Bishop D'Arcis document of 1389, be more acceptable than Robert de Clari's account of the shroud he saw in Constantinople in 1203? De Clari was a French soldier during the unfortunate Fourth Crusade's sack of Constantinople, and gave at that time a precise description of the figured shroud he saw exposed every Friday in the Church of the Virgin of Blachernae. The D'Arcis document, by contrast, is an unsigned, undated draft.

Dr Scavone wished to remind viewers of the 6th century Greek 'Acts of Thaddeus', an ancient document describing a cloth folded in eight with an image on it 'not made by human hands', also the still existing sermon of the archdeacon Gregory dating from August 16 944 AD, describing the full length image and the side wound on the Shroud-Mandyion. This sermon was delivered in Constantinople on the day when this arrived there from Edessa. Unfortunately, however, his mention of these earlier documents was not broadcast in the programme. Instead vague re-enactments of pilgrimages to the Shroud in the Middle Ages were lengthily dwelt upon as if to prove that the Shroud was forged to generate funds. Yet this supposed medieval forgery we cannot create today. We cannot even copy it properly.

After a rather good discussion on X-ray fluorescence photography, and how it proved that the Shroud cannot be a painting, it was out of place to see **Richard Bresee** trying to imitate the image on the Shroud through the dust transfer technique. This manipulation went on and on. It was followed by my own studies regarding the true position of the body imaged on the Shroud. This position shows a strong foreshortening of the otherwise

apparently perfect body, successfully putting the Bresee manipulations to rest. The intricate art anatomy and foreshortening shown on my drawing and on the photo depicting the experiment to achieve the anatomical study was unknown in the Middle Ages, and for more than the next hundred years until the Renaissance. These studies also exclude any contact image and that cancels the fungus-created latent image shown by Dr. Garza Valdes in the programme.

But since these details of my experiment were not adequately explained, I wonder if people who are neither professionally trained artists nor sindonologists were able to sort out the details for themselves? Nevertheless, I am very grateful that I was given a chance to show my experiment on the programme.

My final sentence in the programme needs explanation: "It would be wrong to say that the man of the Shroud is Jesus Christ - the arts did not prove it, science did not prove it, even while there is overwhelming evidence". This was taken completely out of context. I was answering a question about why the Church was never able to officially pronounce the Shroud the burial cloth of Jesus Christ, bearing his true image. Without inclusion of the question which I was answering my response sounded abrupt and negative. This was never intended.

I think that to say that the final answer about the Shroud comes through faith and not science is a pious ploy by which the programme tried to soften its subtle verdict that the Shroud is not authentic. But this answer is not adequate. We do not need the Shroud for our faith. Faith is there without it. We are not and should not speak about our Christian faith versus the Shroud of Turin. We need to address it on its own, and science, and the professional arts with their imaging experience, are part of it.

To me - and this is my true answer - the greatest proof of the Shroud's authenticity is that an undeniable and curiously personal intellectual challenge is constantly posed to us when we address it. As we move forward and we know more, this challenge becomes more intense and moves us forward into the future. I think we follow a leader. To me "The Mysterious Man of the Shroud" was the very best TV programme so far produced on the Shroud, and with the qualifications made above I wish to congratulate Terry Landau most warmly on it.

Isabel Piczek