

EDITORIAL

By Ian Wilson

Now for the Good News!

The last *Newsletter's* Editorial looked forward to being able to publish some good news in this present issue. However, even until very recently the situation in Turin did not look promising. When my wife and I visited the city at the beginning of April the Cathedral environs looked just like a building site, the Cathedral itself was still closed to normal visitors, and on our being specially allowed inside, preparations for the Exposition clearly had a very long way to go. The underlying brickwork for a new altar area was still being laid, all around was a jumble of building equipment and materials, and the basic framework for the walkways for visitors only just beginning to be put in place.

Despite this, already stunning at the back of the Cathedral, cleverly concealing the still terrible damage from the fire of April 11, 1997 that lies immediately behind it, was a temporary wall, painted *trompe d'oeil* style with a surreal view of the Bertola altar of the Royal Chapel as it looked before the fire (see top photo to the cover of this Newsletter). As a piece of scenery painting, this actually provides a better 'view' of the altar than was ever possible before. We were also deeply impressed by the quiet calm and confidence of **Don Giuseppe Ghiberti**, Cardinal Saldarini's appointee as the man overall in charge of the Expositions, likewise that of **Professor Bruno Barberis**, who was equally busy preparing a special new Museum of the Shroud at the Centro's premises in Via San Domenico. Even so it looked as if a miracle was needed for all to be ready in time.

Thankfully, on our re-visit on the second day of the Expositions, April 19 (cancellation of our Alitalia flight from London meant we missed the opening day), all had been transformed. By early that morning steady, well-controlled streams of pilgrims were making their way past the Shroud, which hung illuminated by lamps so cleverly arranged that it seemed as if lit from within. Likewise the new Museum, which two weeks before we had seen as an empty shell, was a model of taste and good order. **Emanuela and Maurizio Marinelli**, who were present on the opening day, have provided a detailed report, which was rushed to **Barrie Schwartz's** Internet site. Similarly **Richard Orareo** of the Holy Shroud Library of Boston, USA, was present and felt impelled to record his impressions. Both reports follow this editorial, and with Richard Orareo I can only echo heartiest congratulations to those in Turin whose dedication and perseverance made it all happen.

As I write, therefore, the Shroud is now open to the eyes of the world for the first time in twenty years, also for the first time since the carbon dating of 1988. From my personal experience of being interviewed in the US, UK and Australia, media reactions have been fascinating. Before the expositions there were surprisingly widespread press reports of various researchers' discoveries on the Shroud of images of coins over the eyes, of lettering, and of flowers, with even some 'quality' publications comparatively respectfully quoting these as suggesting the Shroud might be authentic, despite the personal doubts on

such matters that I expressed in the last Editorial. (For a strong rejoinder from **Dr. Alan Whanger** concerning these doubts, see pp.24-32).

Around the time of the exposition proper, much of the interest turned to the finding of DNA in the Shroud bloodstain areas, and the again (to me) far-fetched idea that it might eventually be possible to clone a new Jesus from this. It seems few want to address the truly serious issues that the Shroud raises! However, particularly in the US there was certainly keen interest in the argument that the carbon dating verdict of 1988 may well have been skewed by the presence of so-called 'bioplastic' coating.

Inevitably the Expositions have prompted a flood of new books on the Shroud, including one by myself, and some publishers' advertisement leaflets have therefore been included in addition to a bumper crop of notices about the latest publications.