

British Society for the Turin Shroud

Shroud Newsletter No. 53

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Editorial - Witness of New Life....

First, profuse apologies to all members for the late publication of this Newsletter. My recently producing a book - not on the Shroud - to a very tight deadline has played havoc with intentions that had been to get this Newsletter to you even as early as May this year, June and November being my normal target months for publication. Next year will be the twentieth year of my producing this Newsletter - to a much bigger scale, albeit less frequently, than in the early 1980s - and the task does not get any easier.

In this issue I have tried to accommodate more articles, it being worth reminding that the Society has no 'party line' on Shroud matters. In this and other issues I have sometimes accepted for publication articles reflecting ideas and opinions that I would not necessarily personally endorse. More articles are always welcome, the crucial request being that they should be kept reasonably short and free of repeated technical jargon. It should also be clearly understood by contributors that the right is reserved to make textual cuts and to change obscure terminology, also to anglicise texts provided by individuals for whom English is not their first language. Particularly cognisant of my and Barrie's traumas at the hands of the O'Mara publishers - we have effectively abandoned hope that there might be a new edition of our book with improved colour - I always try to make any editorial changes as judiciously as possible. But my apologies to any contributor who may feel that the red pencil has been used too harshly.

The Newsletter is rarely without an obituary, and this issue is no exception. The late Baroness Ryder, who succeeded her husband Lord Cheshire as the Society's honorary President and Patron, never became closely involved in the Society's affairs, but her passing marks the end of what I would term the 'Cheshire' connection with the Shroud. For me that goes back to the mid-1950s when an article on the Shroud by the then Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC in a copy of *Picture Post* planted a seed that would have the profoundest effect on my life, and indeed my faith. As for the death of Fr. Francis O'Leary, it is one of my great regrets that somehow or other we never asked him to talk to the BSTS. Yet giving lectures was never what Fr. Francis was all about. And how do you put into words the passing of a legend?

But while the Shroud by its very nature is an imprint of death - certainly for those who believe in its authenticity - far, far more importantly it is also a witness of New Life. And we must rejoice that despite the passing of old faces, newcomers thankfully continue to emerge, and to make their own special mark. In Newsletter 52 you were introduced to Michael Hesemann of Germany, whose book *Die Stummen Zeugen von Golgotha*, (the 'Silent Witnesses of Golgotha' - one of those witnesses being the Shroud), is warmly reviewed later in this Newsletter. Michael will be one of the speakers at the forthcoming Dallas Conference, and it is to be hoped that an English translation of his book will become available very soon.

And another most welcome newcomer is 16-year old Joseph Durham of Mount Orab, Ohio, with whom Barrie Schwartz and I have both been in recent e-mail correspondence. Joseph has been studying the Shroud for six years, and teaching at his church's Adult Sunday School for the last

three. At present he is working on a very detailed Shroud programme - already some 400 pages long - in which the user is invited to decide whether he or she wants to assume the standpoint of a believer, an unbeliever, or undecided. I anticipate that we will be hearing a lot more from Joseph in years to come. He says that he will be attending the Dallas Conference, so it can only be hoped that those attending the gathering will be sure to give a very warm welcome to the English-speaking world's youngest 'Shroudie'.

Of Cabinet Shuffles....

Since publication of the last Newsletter the Shroud has been moved into yet another new storage cabinet. Although no details of this have been released it is said to be much smaller than the previous one, which was featured in Newsletter No.49. This latter cabinet, which replaced the one that fireman Mario Trematore smashed open during the 1997 Cathedral fire, cost zillions of lire (according to some estimates around £120,000), yet lasted less than three years, from 1998 to 2000. Equipped with every conceivable security device and climate control, it apparently cracked under its own weight.

The present cabinet, of which no photograph is available, is therefore the fourth 'permanent' home that the Shroud has had within the last decade. This is in striking contrast to the relatively modest silvered wooden container that was provided in 1694, which lasted for three centuries, and is still in good condition in Turin's Shroud Museum. Is the Shroud's first and only occupant trying to tell us something? The newest cabinet, like its predecessors, is said to have been designed to provide maximum security and to protect the Shroud from light, pollution and other environmental hazards.

The Shroud's location in the Cathedral has also been changed. Stored within the new cabinet it now reposes in the upper tier of a theatre-like 'royal box' to the left of the high altar [see photo right]. Since this 'box' is normally covered with drapes, most likely for security reasons, not even the cabinet is normally visible, overall a far cry from Guarino Guarini's sublime altar that was the Shroud's home from 1693-1993. The life-size photograph of the Shroud that was displayed on the front of the earlier cabinet is now in the ground floor area.



The Shroud's new location to the left of the Cathedral high altar. Photo: Aldo Guerreschi

Shroud Custodian Archbishop Severino Poletto elevated to Cardinal

As widely expected, Archbishop Severino Poletto of Turin, who in the autumn of 1999 succeeded to the Turin archbishopric and became the Shroud's custodian on the retirement of Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini, has been elevated to Cardinal.

Severino Poletto was one of 37 new cardinals appointed by Pope John Paul II at a Papal Consistory on 21 February of this year. It is in fact normal always for each newly-appointed holder of the Turin archbishopric to become a cardinal at the next round of such appointments. The British Society for the Turin Shroud extends its warmest congratulations to Cardinal Poletto.

'New' Revelations concerning the Shroud's Underside?

At the Shroud conference held in Turin in March of last year probably the strongest recommendation that was put forward by the English language attendees (including by your Editor), was for the Shroud image to be scanned by the latest digital techniques. This can enable the image and other characteristics to be more fully documented than is possible via conventional photography, particularly since some digital techniques can provide a virtual chemical analysis of the areas scanned. No time appears to have been lost implementing this procedure, at least with regard to the Shroud's normally inaccessible and invisible underside.

According to a *Zenit* report of 11 May of this year, a flatbed scanner was inserted between the Shroud and its 16th century backing cloth, this latter having been affixed in 1534 as a strengthening, following the damage the Shroud sustained in the 1532 fire, thereby making the underside inaccessible. The backing cloth must therefore have been partly unstitched to allow this procedure. The scanning work was carried out by Paolo Soardo of the Galileo Ferraris Institute over a period of a week (dates unspecified) in the Cathedral sacristy, the same location where in March of 2000 Cardinal Poletto showed the Shroud to those of us who attended the conference held in Turin at that time. Although no photographs have yet been made available, the scanning apparently revealed that bloodstains from the wounds in the feet, hands and arms show up on the underside of the Shroud.

Claimed in the media as a new discovery, this in fact merely corroborates the visual observation of this same characteristic when one side of the backing cloth was unstitched during the STURP scientific examination that was carried out in 1978. In press interviews Monsignor Giuseppe Ghiberti, vice-president of Cardinal Poletto's Commission for the Exposition of the Shroud, also pointed out—as if a new finding—that the latest research seriously undermines arguments that the Shroud's image might have been 'formed by combustion, i.e. created by some kind of 'hot statue' technique. In fact the 1978 research had again already determined this. On a more positive note it is understood that colour and black and white photographs of the images obtained are to be published in two volumes, one for the general public, and one for specialists. These should certainly be a valuable contribution to future Shroud studies.

Barrie Schwartz—'Compelled to speak out....'

Professional photographer Barrie Schwartz of Los Angeles, creator of the Shroud website www.shroud.com, who normally tries to remain as neutral as possible in Shroud politics, has felt impelled to make the following comments on the latest tests, as posted on his website on 27 June.

Barrie Schwartz writes:

I rarely use this website as a forum for my personal opinions, but I feel compelled to speak out in response to the [Zenit] article. It makes several points about Shroud research that I believe need clarification.

As most of you know, the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP), spent 120 hours in October 1978 performing an in-depth examination of the cloth. Working alongside STURP were a number of Italian researchers. One of these, Professor Giovanni Riggi, used an endoscopic camera

system to look at and photograph the underside of the Shroud. Prof. Riggi's resulting photographs clearly showed the blood had soaked through the cloth. To accommodate his experiment, a small section of the Shroud was separated from its backing cloth by a Poor Clare nun, giving the researchers the first look at the underside of the Shroud in 400 years. In fact, one of my most well known and often published photographs from 1978 is of the precise moment this "first look" occurred [see right]

While Prof. Riggi manipulated his fiber optic probe between the Shroud and its backing cloth, the focusing light of his camera system backlit the Shroud, showing the density of the bloodstains and making it very apparent that the blood had soaked through the cloth. It was then that Eric Jumper, STURP co-founder, told me that I must photograph the entire Shroud with transmitted light, which I did several days later. The resulting photographs clearly revealed higher densities in these areas, confirming the bloodstains and water stains on the Shroud soaked through the cloth. Toward the end of our examination, a larger section of the Shroud (near the ventral feet), was separated from the backing cloth and again bloodstains were observed and photographed on the back side.

The article also states that this new research disputes the theory that the Shroud was "formed by combustion." However, the actual scientific evidence that excludes heat as the image formation mechanism of the Shroud is the ultraviolet fluorescence photography done in 1978 by Vernon Miller. Since scorched linen fluoresces under specific ultraviolet illumination, the entire Shroud was photographed using special UV lights and filters. The resulting photographs clearly showed fluorescence in all the known burn and scorch marks on the Shroud, but absolutely no fluorescence in the image area. Thus, we were able to exclude "combustion" as an image formation mechanism in 1978.

However, my purpose in writing this is not to argue who did what first or criticize the recently performed experiment and its results. I think it is wonderful that 21st century technology is being ap-



Viewing of the Shroud's underside in 1978. Photo by Barrie Schwartz

plied to Shroud research and have personally lobbied for further research using new digital imaging technologies myself. My criticism is that the Turin authorities took an important opportunity to gather new data from the Shroud and applied it to questions that had been answered long ago.

Last year the Turin authorities sent out an urgent call to Sindonologists worldwide to submit proposals for future research and set a deadline of October 31, 2000. I am told they received dozens, if not hundreds of responses and many of these were from top researchers around the world. The plan was that these would be reviewed and evaluated and certain groups and individuals would be chosen to perform the tests at some later date. In spite of this, and almost immediately after the deadline expired, the scanning tests mentioned in the above article were performed. Interestingly, none of the researchers who submitted proposals that included this type of scanning were ever contacted or consulted prior to the November tests.

It is my hope that the Turin authorities proceed with the evaluation of the proposals they received as originally planned, and select appropriate, qualified researchers to perform new data gathering tests on the Shroud based on the quality of their proposals, experience, technology and credentials. But I strongly believe it is necessary to select tests that will help us gather new data and not put the Shroud at risk (from exposure to light, handling and the polluted air in Turin) in the wasted effort of redoing experiments that have already been done or re-proving science that has already been proved.

Could the Savoys get their Turin Palace back?

As well-known to historians, the Shroud was a family treasure of the Savoy family of Italy for nearly five centuries, following their acquisition of it from Margaret de Charny in 1453. When the Chapel of the Shroud was built in the 17th century, it was specially sited between the then ducal Palace and Turin Cathedral, joining both together at upper floor level, so that the then ducal family could walk into from their adjacent apartments (and thereby attend Mass), without their actually leaving the palace environs.

Then in 1946 the people of Italy held a referendum in favour of a republic, following ex-king Umberto II of Savoy's support for Mussolini. As a result of the vote, the entire Savoy family was sent into exile, its male members constitutionally debarred from ever again setting foot in Italy. At one fell stroke they thereby lost their Palace, its contents, and the Shroud along with it. Their only consolation was that the Catholic Church continued to recognise Umberto's right to be consulted on Shroud matters up to his death in 1983, following which the Shroud was bequeathed to the present Pope and his successors.

For decades the generality of Italians have exhibited little inclination to change this state of affairs. Up to the time of his death Umberto mostly lived in Portugal. The closest that his now 64-year-old son and heir, Prince Victor Emmanuel, was able to get to Italy was glimpses from his yacht while cruising in international waters off the Italian coast. In the 1970s, idly discharging his rifle on this same yacht while moored off Corsica, he fatally wounded a German tourist asleep in a neighbouring vessel. Though a French court acquitted him of manslaughter charges, the incident hardly improved the chances of the Italian monarchy's reinstatement.

But in just the last few years, perhaps fuelled by royalty elsewhere in Europe, such as in Spain, Romania and Bulgaria, being allowed to return to their former domains, a new mood has been afoot. Recent opinion polls show that almost 80% of Italians are in favour of a return of the Savoys. Prince Victor Emmanuel's sister, the Princess Maria Gabriella of Savoy, who as a female has not been debarred from Italy, has been working hard increasing her association with the Shroud. Recently she toured as far as Australia with an exhibition of old prints of expositions of the Shroud dating from the centuries when the cloth was a Savoy family heirloom. And the recent election victory in Italy of the centre-right coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi has given Prince Victor Emmanuel cause for optimism

that within a year or so an already four-year-old bill overturning the Savoys' exile will gain approval within the Italian parliament.

So far this is thought unlikely to mean that the Savoys will be able to regain their former palace in Turin. This is currently controlled by the Italian state, who have been spending millions repairing and refurbishing those parts of it damaged during the 1997 fire, along with the Royal or Guarini Chapel in which the Shroud reposed up to 1993. But as Romania's King Michael, 50 years after his abdication, has recently been promised a palace in Bucharest, anything is possible....