

EDITORIAL

A highly charged, eventful and emotional six months have passed since the last newsletter. Right at the beginning of the year the Shroud was making the headlines all over the world after retired Los Alamos scientist and Chemical Director of the STURP team Ray Rogers claimed that he had scientifically invalidated the 1988 carbon dating of the Shroud, which as we all know placed its fabrication within the years 1260 to 1390. This sensational news almost seemed too good to be true, and was quickly followed by all kinds of reactions, both for and against.

While the arguments were raging, Ray died on 8 March. Our condolences go out to his widow Joan and all his family, together with all the messages which can be seen on Barrie Schwartz's web site at www.shroud.com. Barely a month later the news came of the death of Pope John Paul II, the first Papal owner of the Shroud and spiritual leader of millions of people the world over.

The visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich have always been a point for discussion - should they be included in Shroud studies or do they take away from the strictly scientific point of view? Do they really suggest that the Shroud kept in Turin is not the original burial cloth of Jesus?

The British Society for the Turin Shroud newsletter is open to all points of view about the Shroud, regardless of what my own or anyone else's personal inclinations might be, provided that such points of view are expressed respectfully and correctly. The fact that the first article in this particular newsletter is precisely about Anne Catherine Emmerich does not constitute any party line for the Society - it just means that the person in question and her visions are related to the Shroud and as such deserve publication. The article was written by BSTS member Joe Derham.

Pope John Paul II was the first papal owner of the Shroud of Turin, while the Archbishop of Turin its custodian on his behalf. Umberto II of Savoy bequeathed the Shroud to him in 1983, although there seems to be a tacit agreement that the shroud will remain in Turin rather than go to Rome.

The British Society for the Turin Shroud is completely non-denominational, and the fact that John Paul II appears on the front cover should in no way be construed as contradicting this. In fact, the decision about who to put on the front cover was a most difficult decision to take - I was torn between John Paul II and Ray Rogers, two men with a great interest in the Shroud of Turin, each in their own (very different) field. In the end, I decided for the Pope, given his position as owner of the Shroud and spiritual leader to millions of people the world over.

I see no reason to write up the Pope's biography again in the newsletter, although I would like to quote one incident in his life that I came across while reading the monumental history of the Jews of Europe in the Second World War, better known as the Holocaust, written by Sir Martin Gilbert. It is a little-known incident and yet to my mind shows great wisdom and depth.

“Among those deported from Cracow were Moses and Helen Hiller, whose two-year-old son had been given refuge by Josef Jachowicz and his wife in nearby Dabrowa. Neither parent survived. When Shachne cried out for his father and mother, as he often did, Jachowicz and his wife feared that neighbours would betray them to the Gestapo. Mrs. Jachowicz became very attached to the little boy, loved his bright inquiring eyes, took great pride in her ‘son’, and took him regularly to church. Soon, he knew by heart all the Sunday hymns.

A devout Catholic, Mrs. Jachowicz decided to have Shachne Hiller baptised, and went to see a young parish priest, Karol Wojtyla, who had a reputation for wisdom and trustworthiness. Revealing the secret of the boy's identity, Mrs. Jachowicz told the priest of her wish that Shachne should become a 'true Christian' and devout Catholic like herself.

Wojtyla listened intently to the woman's story. When she had finished, he asked: 'And what was the parents' wish, when they entrusted their only child to you and to your husband?' Mrs. Jachowicz told him that Helen Hiller's last request had been that the child should be told of his Jewish origins, and 'returned to his people' if his parents died. Hearing this, Wojtyla replied that he would not perform the baptism ceremony. It would be unfair, he explained, to baptise Shachne while there was still hope that, once the war was over, his relatives might take him.

Shachne Hiller not only survived the war, but was eventually united with his relatives in the United States. Karol Wojtyla was later to become Pope, as John Paul II".