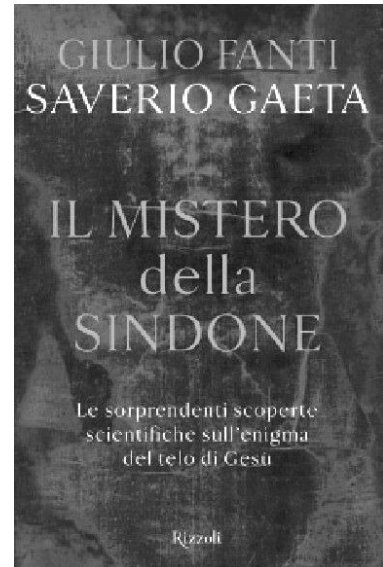


## Editor's Book Reviews

Giulio Fanti and Saverio Gaeta, *Il Mistero della Sindone, Le sorprendenti scoperte scientifiche sull'enigma del telo di Gesu*. [The Mystery of the Shroud, The amazing scientific discoveries about the enigma of Jesus' winding sheet] Rizzoli, 2013, 240 pp, 18 euro.



This book attracted news headlines around the world at the time of its publication this Easter, and although no copy has yet been received for review within this Newsletter, sufficient is known about it for at least some interim comment. Giulio Fanti, already well known in Shroud circles, is a professor of mechanical engineering at Padua University. Saverio Gaeta is an Italian journalist.

The 'amazing' discoveries referred to concern tests that Fanti and his team conducted on fibres that were apparently removed from the Shroud in 1988, simultaneously with the samples given to the Oxford, Zurich and Arizona laboratories for carbon dating purposes. According to the available reports of Fanti and Gaeta's book, Fanti's new tests, using infra-red light and Raman spectroscopy measurement techniques, also 'a multi-parametric mechanical test based on five different mechanical parameters' 'confirm' that the Shroud dates back to the first century AD. The key statement, as published in the Vatican journal *Vatican Insider*, is as follows:

“The new tests carried out in the University of Padua labs were carried out by a number of university professors from various Italian universities and agree that the Shroud dates back to the period when Jesus Christ was crucified in Jerusalem. Final results show that the Shroud fibres examined produced the following dates, all of which are 95% certain and centuries away from the medieval dating obtained with Carbon-14 testing in 1988: the dates given to the Shroud after FT-IR testing, is 300 BC  $\pm$ 400, 200 BC  $\pm$ 500 after Raman testing and 400 AD  $\pm$ 400 after multi-parametric mechanical testing. The average of all three dates is 33 BC  $\pm$ 250 years. The tests were carried out using tiny fibres of material extracted from the Shroud by micro-analyst Giovanni Riggi di Numana who passed away in 2008 but had participated in the 1988 research project and gave the material to Fanti through the cultural institute Fondazione 3M.”

Even based on this limited information the book carries two fundamental weaknesses. The first concerns the samples used. In his role as the Shroud's official custodian Turin's Cardinal Cesare Nosiglia was quick to issue the following statement: "Since there is no degree of safety on the authenticity of the materials on which these experiments were carried out to the Shroud cloth the

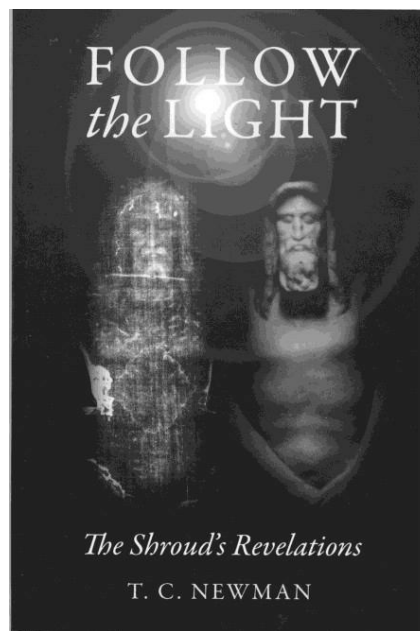
owners and custodians cannot recognize any serious value to the results of these alleged experiments."

The root of the problem lies in the information that the samples on which Fanti and his team derived from the microanalyst Giovanni Riggi. In 1988 Riggi was the very man who actually cut from the Shroud the sliver of linen then divided between the Oxford, Zurich and Arizona laboratories for carbon dating purposes. But in order to provide the three laboratories with samples of roughly equal size Riggi did some trimming, subsequently retaining the trimmed-off portions of fabric for his own personal study. Controversy surrounds whether Riggi had the then archbishop of Turin (cardinal Ballestrero)'s permission to retain these portions, and with Ballestrero and Riggi both being deceased the issue can no longer be resolved. Nevertheless the official view in Turin is that any samples that belonged to Riggi can have no official recognition, hence any tests carried out on these cannot be recognised likewise.

The second major weakness of Fanti and Gaeta's book must concern the tests themselves. However much anyone may question the results of the particular carbon dating tests that were carried out on the Shroud back in 1988, radiocarbon dating remains in general a very well tried and tested method for dating organic materials of otherwise undetermined date. But FT-IR testing? Raman testing? 'Multi-parametric mechanical testing'? How much recognition do these carry amongst the world's archaeologists? Although I am not a scientist, I do regularly read archaeological reports, but I have yet to hear of any archaeological artefact being authoritatively dated using such technology. And until I do I can only question the wisdom of any responsible scientist challenging the 1988 dating of the Turin Shroud on the basis of such thinly recognised methodology...

**T.C. Newman Follow the Light, The Shroud's revelations, Outskirts Press Inc, 2012, soft-back, 98 pp. with numerous black and white photos throughout the text. U. S. \$14.95. Available worldwide, from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, i-book, Nook, and Kindle. If you go to the Internet link <http://www.outskirtspress.com/followthelight>, this will bring up the Outskirts Press order page.**

A refreshing feature of this book is that it is not just another regurgitation of the sort of third and fourth hand information that is all too common amongst self-published books on the Shroud. 'T.C. Newman' is the pseudonym of an American artist and mother who thirty years ago began a series of highly original experiments relating to the Shroud's image, initially as a home-science project for her then eight-year old daughter, referred to throughout the book as Jessica (apparently another pseudonym).



Using a windowless room, a light-box taped up to allow only a thin strip of light, Plasticine modeling clay and a penlight, Mrs. Newman set out to mould the Plasticine in the room's semi-

darkness so that its highlights and shadows matched those of the Shroud negative. Her theory was that when these high- lights and shadows matched what she observed on the Shroud, the three- dimensionality that she was creating on the Plasticine had to be correct. The book takes the reader through her experiments first with creating the Shroud face, then front and back views of the body (revealing an enlarged abdomen), then a special study of the crossed hands. Mrs. Newman's description of her work on the crossed hands typifies the general style of the book:

'I stared at the figure, not understanding what I was looking at... Then it finally dawned on me why the hands are the way they are.

...Suddenly the realization struck me as to why the fingers and arms were appearing so elongated. There, besides the man's right hand was another set of fingers.

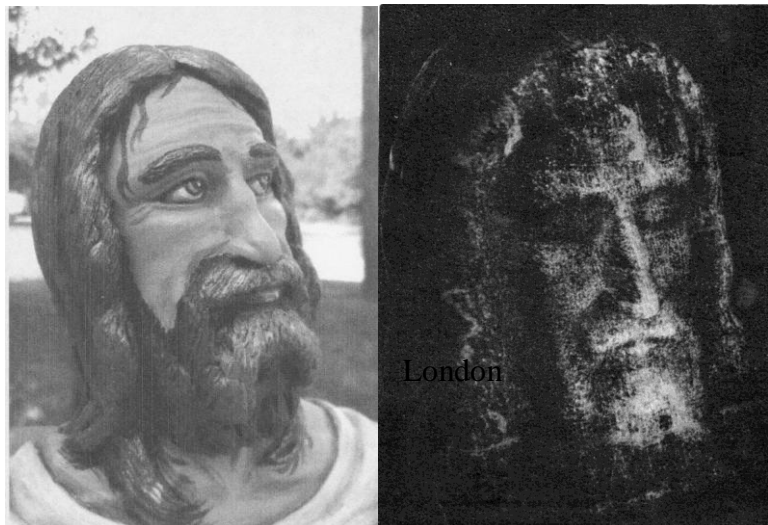
'Jessie!' I exclaimed. 'There are two sets of fingers here: do you know what this means? This new set of fingers also recorded the reflection, which is showing in the picture. The fingers were almost straight and then moved down in a more closed position - or vice-versa. This is what we call a double-exposure, which suggests that the light came in bursts, like a strobe. The fingers and arms of this man appear long, because they moved forward...'

...During the instant of the creation of the Shroud's image this stiff and swollen, days old, bloodied crucified corpse moved!

This rather engaging 'reported conversation' style of narrative is maintained throughout most of the book, and along with plenty of in-text photographs, all makes for fluent, easy reading. I have to confess though, that despite Mrs. Newman's 'follow the light' experiments seeming to be explained simply enough to be comprehended by her eight year old daughter, in actuality I found myself needing to read quite slowly to make sure that I understood what was being described. And I would have appreciated some diagrams just to help me better understand the basic set-up within that windowless room. Furthermore the very scale of Mrs. Newman's various 'discoveries' in the course of her experiments somewhat worries me. Any one of them, such as the 'hands moved' observation, would be quite groundbreaking if it were to be properly validated. For it worries me that Mrs. Newman's findings can truly stand the weight that she attributes to them. Thus the crucial test of the validity of Mrs. Newman's findings should lie in the quality of the sculpture that she creates, sculpture which, if her 'follow the light' methodology can be relied on as accurate, should produce an anatomically convincing result.

Right: Reconstruction of the Shroud face by T.C. Newman

Far right: Reconstruction by photographer Leo Vala, 1960s



Yet in actuality, at least in this reviewer's opinion, her artworks fail quite seriously in this respect. Thus the painted sculpture of the man of the Shroud's' head that Mrs. Newman reproduces on her pages 95-6, a sculpture representing the culmination of her experimental procedures, looks quite clumsy and amateur compared to London photographer Leo Vala's somewhat equivalent version, one created nearly fifty years ago using a plasticized moulding material and paired slide projectors (see previous page). And undoubtedly surpassing both of these is the superb bust (see back cover of this Newsletter), created a decade ago by Spanish sculptor Dr. D. Juan Manuel Miñarro, Titular Professor of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Seville, and a member of the Centro Español de Sindonología, the Spanish equivalent of the BSTS.

And for reconstructing the body of the man of the Shroud, it seem to me vastly preferable, methodology-wise, that an actual human body should be used for comparison and anatomical reference purposes, just as the Los Angeles artist Isabel Piczek did in her work with life models back in the late 1990s. Nevertheless, Mrs. Newman very commendably challenges her readers to try her procedures for themselves to check out the validity of her findings. That, I readily confess, is something that I haven't yet done for myself. So if I do, and I there- upon change my mind, I will be sure to correct any misjudgment.