

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

From San Antonio, Texas

Top carbon dating scientist accepts that the Shroud has fungus coating

On September 2-3 of last year a Round Table on the microbiology of ancient artefacts, with particular reference to the Turin Shroud, was held at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas. Among the leading scientists to take part was University of Texas microbiologist Dr. Leoncio Garza-Valdes, who claims that the Shroud radiocarbon dating may have been seriously skewed by the Shroud's surface being coated with a living organism called *Lichenothelia* (see Newsletter no. 37). Another key participant was University of Rochester nuclear physicist Dr. Harry Gove, who developed the carbon dating technique used by all three carbon dating laboratories in 1988 to 'test' the Shroud. Historian Professor Dan Scavone of the University of Southern Indiana, who was also present, reports:

The 'Round Table' was as exciting and productive as any of us could have hoped. Although Dr. Jull of the University of Arizona finally pulled out of the meeting, Dr. Harry Gove did attend and was, albeit reluctantly, quite impressed with the work being done in Texas. After some lively debate during the informally designed Round Table and, later that evening, observation of Shroud threads under the microscope, Gove said on Saturday September 2nd that he had observed what Garza had been asserting: that actual cellulose accounts for only about 40% of a Shroud thread, the bio-plastic coating accounting for 60%. What the labs dated, therefore, will have been the recent accretions of micro-organic life and the hard coating they form *more* so than pure Shroud linen. [Letter to the Editor, October 3 1994]

If this statement is accurate (and a videotape of the proceedings is awaited), then it is by far the most important finding on the Shroud since the carbon dating of 1988, and utterly undermines the latter. For it does not need a scientific brain to recognize that if an integral part of the Shroud were something partly still alive, comprising organisms building up over many centuries in the manner of a coral reef, then any carbon dating (which 'clocks' loss of radioactivity throughout the whole sample) would have to be seriously misleading. It would indiscriminately 'date' material still alive and material which died within the last century along with material genuinely two thousand years old. The result might well show that the Shroud 'seemed' to date to the fourteenth century - but it would be utterly wrong.

Prof. Scavone adds:

Dr. Garza also reported to me by phone his discovery that the alkaline sodium hydroxide cleansing solution used by the carbon dating labs (the 'base' in the 'acid-base-acid' sequence, with hydrochloric acid) will destroy cellulose while leaving the bio-plastic coating relatively unscathed. Therefore the carbon dating labs will themselves have created conditions for a more recent radiocarbon date! Moreover, says Garza, Gove agreed, since he recalled that about fifteen years ago a chemist (unnamed) had reported that fact to him. Perhaps it did not register as relevant at the time. If this is true, it will be significant not only for the Shroud, but also for all other radiocarbon datings of cloth. ...

Dr. Garza-Valdes is reported to be working on a method of isolating (and saving) the original Shroud cellulose from the bio-plastic coating so that a Shroud dating could be obtained free of 'interference' from the *lichenothelia*. Could this be the start of the breakthrough that those still supportive of the Shroud's authenticity have awaited since 1988?

From Paris

Record attendance at CIELT's January Meeting

On 4th January at Paris's ultra-modern Palais des Congres the highly active and forward looking French Shroud group CIELT held a Grand Reunion Publique 'Le Linceul de Turin, "Carte d'Identité" du Christ?' Held in honour of the late Professor Jerome Lejeune, who died last Easter, the meeting proved so popular that the audience overflowed the 700 seat conference room, and a further 500 had to be accommodated in a second conference room with just the sound relayed to them. It was proof that in France at least public interest in the Shroud remains very much alive.

The first main speaker was Professor Yvonne Bongert of the Université de Droit de Paris, who outlined Professor Lejeune's special interest in the 12th century Pray manuscript (so-called after its discovery by the 18th century Jesuit historian Georgius Pray), preserved in the National Széchenyi Library, Budapest. Showing four drawings from the manuscript photographed by Prof Lejeune on a special visit to Budapest, Prof. Bongert pointed to a whole series of features which make it, in her view, certain that the 12th century artist who drew these knew the Shroud. In the case of the manuscript's familiar Entombment drawing [see opposite] these are (i) the so Shroud-like crossed hands (ii) the same figure's total nudity, very unusual for Byzantine art at that time; (iii) the fact that the same figure is represented with four fingers but no thumbs, exactly as on the Shroud; (iv) the fact that the Shroud's "poker holes" seem to be represented in the Visit to the Sepulchre scene below this.

In the case of the manuscript's less familiar Christ Enthroned drawing [see the title page of this Newsletter] these are [i] three nails on the patibulum of the cross - indicating that the artist believed that Jesus's feet had been transfixed by a single nail - exactly as indicated on the Shroud; [ii] the fact that while the figure of Christ in this scene is conventionally depicted with a nail-wound through the palm of his left hand, the nail-wound in his right hand would appear to be through his wrist. For Prof. Bongert the accumulation of these features conclusively indicates that the Shroud must have been known to Byzantine artists well before the 1260-1390 dates decreed by carbon dating.

In this regard, while the Pray manuscript was dated to 1192-5 by the scholar Ilona Berkovits, studies of the manuscript's musical notation made by Henri Carcelle, who spoke after Prof Bongert, suggest that it may date even earlier - probably to no later than the middle of the twelfth century. Carcelle showed examples of notations in other manuscripts to argue his point.

Henri Carcelle was followed by moustached Gerard Nomine who pointed out that Dr Alan Adler had convincingly shown that the Shroud's bloodstains' were indeed blood, but the question remained whether the blood was human, also whether it contained genetic information. This had been of particular interest to Prof. Lejeune, who specialised in genetics. Young Belgian

physician Dr. Marie Peters then described how with the aid of a small Shroud sample arranged by CIELT's Andre van Cauwenberghe, she and Prof. Lejeune had been able to identify a quantity of red blood cells, from the analysis of which there was little doubt the blood was human. Gerard Nomine then read a paper on behalf of a Strasbourg forensic scientist who had used the same sample to analyse the DNA, isolating genes from both the X and the Y chromosomes, indicating that the blood came from a male. [Reportedly, an identical finding has been made by Dr. Victor Tryon of the University of Texas, San Antonio, using the same occipital bloodstain sample in which the 'camel-hair textile' was found - Ed]

There followed a somewhat unconvincing presentation by Marcel Alonso of the University of Milan of the case for seeing yet more lettering on the Shroud. Following the earlier (Filas) claims for seeing the letters UCAI as part of a coin inscription, Alonso now claimed that much larger letters PRZO could be distinguished on the dark portion to one side of the man of the Shroud's face; the letters INNECE on the other; and INRI (obviously the most significant) below.

Although Andre Marion of France's Institut Optique then explained how he had set up of an exhaustive computer analysis of the evidence for the existence of this lettering, Marion's enthusiasm for explaining his methodology and equipment was not shared by his audience, who began to grow restive. Fortunately what might have been an embarrassing anti-climax was saved by Prof. Olivier Pourrat who, aided by excellent graphics, concluded the evening with a highly professional overview of the evidence for and against the Shroud's authenticity.

CIELT's indefatigable Andre van Cauwenberghe, who helped mastermind the meeting and specially encouraged your Editor to be present, is to be warmly congratulated for what was overall a most commendable contribution to the Shroud debate.

From South Africa

Photography expert says he knows how the Shroud image was made

In September 1994 a Johannesburg Reuters release reported that Nicholas Allen, a professor of fine arts at Port Elizabeth, South Africa, has claimed that the Shroud is a true photographic negative created in the Middle Ages. According to Prof. Allen, the Shroud was made using a quartz lens, silver nitrate and natural sunlight. "The lens or magnifying glass the person making the Shroud would have used would have been quartz, which was more easily come by than glass. Coincidentally, we now know that this is the only lens that ultraviolet radiation can be transmitted through. It's actually a chemically induced scorch of the linen."

Apparently in making the Shroud the unknown mediaeval photographic pioneer placed the quartz lens halfway between a specially crucified body and the cloth, cloth and body apparently having necessarily been eight yards apart. Accepting the carbon dating of the Shroud to between 1260 and 1390, Prof. Allen pointed out that the technology for the method he envisaged had been available at least two centuries earlier. "Islamic scholars knew how to make silver nitrate in the ninth century and also proved in the tenth century through pinhole images that light travels in straight lines." Allen has apparently produced a human bust on a piece of linen to demonstrate his hypothesis, and argues that instead of being dismissed as a bogus relic the Shroud should

now be restored to its rightful place as "the earliest evidence of photographic technology." Curiously missing in all this (but presumably Professor Allen has his theories), is how this remarkable unknown mediaeval inventor managed also to obtain a specially crucified body for his purpose...

From Turin

Cardinal Saldarini asks for help assembling a Shroud Data-Base

At the end of October Cardinal Saldarini of Turin (seen right), in his capacity as Papal Custodian of the Shroud, wrote to several of the main Shroud groups, including the BSTS, asking for help to assemble a data-base of publications about the Shroud as an aid to future research. Cardinal Saldarini writes: "We wish to set up a computer database for reference and as a point of departure for a series of decisions that the competent ecclesiastical authorities shall have to make or suggest in the name of and on behalf of the owner of the Holy Shroud. The most pressing of these decisions regards the steps to be taken in the conservation of the Shroud itself, and any study of the precious fabric. These records will also be extremely useful for all those who, for various reasons, may wish to study the Shroud and who need complete documentation on the subject."

The Cardinal adds "This survey also aims to carry out a sort of census on the groups and individual experts who work on the subject of the Holy Shroud in the world, and who may be interested in working closely with the Holy See and with the Papal Custodian of the Holy Shroud. I should like moreover to maintain these records up-to-date, adding every new publication that will be sent to us in the future." The BSTS has offered its fullest cooperation, and invites any Shroud groups who may not yet have been approached by the Cardinal to make themselves known. All materials are to be sent in the first instance to the Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia, Via San Domenico 28, 10122 Torino, Italy, tel/fax 39-11-4365832.

From Chicago

Dr. Walter McCrone to write a Shroud book

Dr. Walter McCrone, the Chicago microanalyst who claims the Shroud was painted in the Middle Ages using an iron pigment, says that he is now writing a book on his part in the "Shroud" research. The book is to be a "positive exposition" of his studies. "The case for the opposition will be covered by presenting the counter arguments from STURP Newsletters, their publications, and from the Church, by including representative parts of my voluminous correspondence with Father Rinaldi."

Dr. McCrone says he has had complete success in gaining agreement with the painting hypothesis and a 1355 date from scientists including Carl Sagan and Linus Pauling. This sounds bad news for those who have recently argued that the Shroud is a pioneering example of mediaeval or Renaissance photographic technology.

From Oviedo, Spain

A Successful Congress on the Shroud and Oviedo's 'Santo Sudario'

A Spanish group interested in the Shroud, the Centro Espanol de Sindonologia (C.E.S.) held a special Congress in Oviedo the weekend of 29-31 October, 1994, focusing on an intercomparison between the "Santo Sudario" of Oviedo and the Shroud of Turin. This was attended by Dr. Alan Whanger of North Carolina, who earlier in the year had been invited to Oviedo to help remove blood-stained threads from the Sudario for comparison with like from the Turin Shroud. Of the Congress, Alan's wife Mary writes "By all standards, it was the best such conference we have ever attended. The address of the Centro Espanol di Sindonologia is Avda. Reino de Valencia, 53.9°.16^a, 46005 Valencia, Spain.

From Oregon, U.S.A.

Dr-Alan Whanger and others hold one day conference

A day conference on the Shroud was held at Mount Angel Abbey, St. Benedict, Oregon on Saturday 10 December 1994. Among the participants were John Shulte, who spoke on "Jesus made Kosher", Rodger & Connie Apple, who gave a presentation on the Environmental Study of the Shroud in Jerusalem, Dr Alan Whanger, who demonstrated "A Quantitative Optical Technique for Analyzing and Authenticating the Image on the Shroud of Turin", and Fr Aram Berard who outlined ideas for a National Sindonology Center in the USA.

From Quakertown, Pennsylvania

Paul Maloney's book nears completion

Paul Maloney writes: "I am still working on my Shroud book. Continued health problems have hindered my work, severely curtailing the actual amount of time I can spend bringing it to completion. But we are closer to the finish line than ever before. It will be published in two volumes with work now concentrated on finishing the second. With more than 3000 bibliographic entries (the largest on the topic ever to be published), and a special chapter to link this work to the previous major bibliographies, this portion is done. We are hoping to conclude work on the index (itself a massive project), as soon as possible. Wish me luck!"

From Moscow

Russian Interest in Shroud Grows...

Moscow correspondent Grigori Kaplan reports that interest in the Shroud is gaining ground in Russia. An article by him "The Turin Shroud: Relic or Fraud?" was published in the Russian popular science magazine *Znaniye-Sila* (Knowledge is power).